

## 9th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 25, 2021

Text: John 6:1-21

Theme: We Have Enough

Grace and peace to you from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

It was at our synod assembly that over seven hundred people gathered in a college auditorium to deliberate the business of the church. For two days we sat and listened to reports from our standing committees and the churchwide organization. It was necessary work but difficult to keep alert because of the sheer volume of presentations.

At some point over the years we started to get more creative with our speeches to engender some enthusiasm for our respective causes. When it came time to give the World Hunger report I entered the stage in a genuine bumble bee costume that a friend made for me. I felt like I was all wrapped up in a sleeping bag. It had all the right colors in all the right places and it was complimented with wings and some antennae that sat on top of my head. In addition I held in my hand a honey bucket to receive any financial donations that came my way during the time of the assembly.

Why a bumble bee? Bees are some of the hardest working creatures on our planet. Honeybees and other pollinators help produce crops that give us about one-third of everything we eat. So the bee became a metaphor for the work we wanted to accomplish for World Hunger. One single bee could produce so much in its lifetime and one gift by one individual could make a difference in feeding those in need.

On the surface both the Old Testament reading and the gospel lesson are miracle stories that entail feeding large crowds of people. In 2 Kings a man brought to the man of God the fruits of his labor as an offering. He carried in his sack twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of corn. The prophet (Elisha) told the man to feed the 100 people that happened to be there. The man knew that his offering was not enough but Elisha repeated his request.

The food was distributed and everyone ate and there were still leftovers. In the gospel it is the same story only it was five barley loaves and two fish that fed 5,000 people.

Both of these miracle stories teach us so much. Both speak to the power of God to do things outside our realm of reason. In the Old Testament lesson we must not miss the point that the man offered to God the first fruits of his labor (the very best of his crop) trusting that there will be more to come to feed and support his family. In this act alone he demonstrates to us an understanding that the more we give away the more we will receive. And it is the author of the gospel who confirms for us in this miracle that what he said about Jesus from the very beginning is true. Jesus is the *Logos* (the Word of God). Jesus is the Word that became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory.

In both stories the people eat and there is plenty of food left over. We will not waste our time trying to explain the mechanics of how these things happened. It is sufficient for us to understand that in the midst of human need a man and a young boy appear with some food that was not enough to feed the respective crowd in front of them and yet it was enough. One gift by one individual made a difference.

But the other thing we see in these stories that mirrors our experience is the initial reaction we all have when faced with insurmountable problems. When faced with a personal crisis we can become so paralyzed. When we read about the floods in Germany or the number of lives lost in Florida when the condo collapsed or the destructive fires out West there is the temptation to raise our hands in defeat. In the face of so much pain and suffering we ask ourselves: What can we possibly do? In our prayers of the people we place before God the great needs of humankind because we know whatever we have is not nearly enough.

It is too overwhelming and we shrink in front of so much need. We do not have enough. But our lessons tell us we are to look to God and take his lead. He may not be asking us to feed 5,000 people or even one hundred people but God is asking us to trust in him, to give of our first fruits, to offer hospitality, and to be good stewards of our resources. We need to be willing to give what we have and to let God do the rest.

At Redeemer one of the biggest events that we host is for *Rise Against Hunger*. How did it get started? A man named Ray Buchanan served as a United States Marine during the Vietnam War. During his tour overseas he came to realize that to accomplish any mission required a commitment to something bigger than oneself. Once back home he became a United Methodist pastor and embraced the vision of a world without hunger. He became the co-founder of *Stop Hunger Now* that is now known as *Rise Against Hunger*. He did not have the financial resources to start this organization but he had an idea and he knew a generous donor.

Yesterday we celebrated the life of Linda Peterson, a faithful member of this church. In the words offered by family members and friends without Linda there would be no *Partner for Surgery*. She was the one who encouraged her husband, Frank, to take an early retirement to start this organization. She was instrumental in launching it and was one of its most active and effective volunteers for over twenty years. Because of her efforts, over 16,000 of the most impoverished people in Guatemala have received life-changing surgeries. One gift by one individual can make a difference.

All around us we have people on limited incomes. There are those with limited physical or mental abilities. One out of every ten people in the world are hungry. In the face of it all we look at our resources and it is like a little drop in an ocean of issues. But these lessons give us a different picture. In the hands of a man of God and in the hands of Jesus little can become much, the few can become the many, and the weak can become strong.

Before we still doubt our capabilities in the face of creative people like Ray Buchanan or Linda Peterson let me share with you one more story that demonstrates how important it is to look to God and take his lead.

In the news this week we heard about a girl named Rosalyn that reads just like the Biblical story of Samuel. Rosalyn is eleven-years-old and in her own words she was just sitting in her room playing with her toys like usual when she heard a voice calling her name. She looked around and to her surprise there was no one calling her. So she got up and asked everyone in her house if they were calling her name.

Her dad walked up to her and said it was Jesus. So she went back to her room and talked to him. Jesus told her that he had this mission for her to do.

According to her mom God told Rosalyn to go love the peacemakers of the world by hugging and praying for them. Starting in Louisiana and working their way up towards the East Coast, Rosalyn and her mom and her younger brother have traveled to at least 35 states and will make it to all 50 states before her mission is over. She seeks out emergency response officers and police officers in every state and has also shared her hugs with any person who needs or wants one. She tells the people she meets that the way things are right now it is more important than ever to do this work. Rosalyn told her mom that she needed to love people who may not feel the love right now. She needed to be their beacon of light.

The bee became a metaphor for the work we wanted to accomplish for World Hunger. One single bee could do so much in its lifetime. But one gift or even one hug by one individual could help change the world. Amen