

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent  
John 6:1-15  
March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

You know the difference between a pessimist and an optimist. One will look at a challenge and often times say, “The situation is hopeless.” And the other, the optimist, will look at that same situation and say, “let’s see what we can do.” I hate to admit it, but more times than not, I tend to be the pessimist. Maybe most of us are – it seems to go well with “human nature” to be a pessimist.

And while we may be more one than the other – even a little of both at times – there is definitely a distinction between the pessimist and the optimist. You have seen it and you have experienced it. And, we can even see the distinction in Scripture. Even more specifically, we see this distinction in the Gospel text appointed for this day, the fourth Sunday in Lent, from John chapter 6. We see the distinction in two men. One was named Philip, and the other was Andrew.

There is a contrast between Andrew and Philip. You see, Philip was the man who said, “The situation is hopeless; there is nothing to be done.” He was the pessimist. And then on the other hand we have Andrew. He was the man who said, “I’ll see what I can do; and I’ll trust Jesus to do the rest.” It was Andrew who brought the child to Jesus, and so by doing this, he made the miracle possible. Andrew brought the boy. He did more than just invite him over, he brought the boy. And for us, no one ever knows what will happen and what will come out of it when we bring someone to this place – When we bring them to hear the Gospel, when we bring them to Jesus the Savior. We don’t know what will happen. We don’t know what might happen as we bring up our children in the Love of God. We don’t know the mighty things they may accomplish. If a Sunday school teacher slowly brings a child to Christ, no one knows what that child may some day do for Christ and for His Church. No one knows how the Lord may use that child or person. No one knows what kind of an effect our Lord will have on the hearts of those children. That’s why all of you who are Sunday school teachers and Weekday school teachers and Vacation Bible school teachers are so important. You, by virtue of what you do, are like Andrew, bringing the boy to the Lord. Bringing the Lord to our children.

There’s a story of an old German school master who, when he entered his class of boys in the morning, used to remove his cap and bow ceremoniously to them. One asked him why he did this. His answer was, “You never know what one of these boys may some day become.” And you know, he was right. Because one of those boys he would bow to everyday was named Martin Luther. Andrew did not know what he was doing when he brought that boy to Jesus that day – the day that Jesus would feed the 5,000. However, he was providing material for a miracle. We never know what possibilities we are releasing when we bring someone to the Lord Jesus.

This day, according to the Church year calendar, is sort of a strange day. Historically, this day has been called *Laetare* in the Latin or “rejoicing” in the English. Why are we rejoicing in the middle of Lent? Some have suggested that maybe it’s because we are “mid-lent” now and Holy Week is not too far off. That is a reason to rejoice. Others have suggested that we rejoice on this day because this was the time that the Church was beginning the preparations for those candidates who were going to be Baptized on the Easter Vigil. Easter is approaching quickly for sure. And it is during this time we turn our attention to that miracle that took place when 5,000 people were fed.

You see, we talk about Andrew bringing the boy. We can talk about you and me bringing our friends to worship with us, to Bible class, even to the Adult information class next Sunday. But what this text gives to us is the very thing we need most. That is, what the Lord brings to us. Look at what the Lord brings. He brings food. He brings food the people in the text, and today He brings food for our souls. We rejoice over what our Lord brings to us.

As we look at this text again this morning it really is an amazing thing to see how the Lord brings so much to so many people. This miracle beyond all other miracles shows us how our Lord provides. As Andrew brought that boy and the Lord used the boy Andrew brought. More specifically, he used what the

boy had brought too. As the text says, *“Have the people sit down. There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.”* God providing His people through and by what Andrew brought, that is, what the Lord brought.

On this day of rejoicing in the middle of Lent we never forget that even though our Lord will be taken from us into death, He comes back to show us how His resurrection means victory for us. Do you see how much the Lord brings us? He brings us so much more than could ever fill our stomach. What He brings to us fills our souls. What He brings gives us more than just life on earth, what He brings gives us life eternal. We rejoice over what the Lord brings His people. He never forgets us and He never forsakes us. What the Lord would have us do is to sit down – much like you are sitting today. Much like Mary did at the feet of Jesus as she listened to Him preach while Martha was busy with the preparations in the kitchen. He would have us sit down and eat. Yes, we kneel to eat in this place at the communion rail. But we sit and eat right now. We eat what the Lord brings us. We are given life by our Lord. That indeed feeds more than our stomachs.

It’s hard to look at how much other people have and not think to ourselves how little it seems that we have. We may think, I don’t have the biggest house. I don’t have the most cars. I don’t have the most of any kind of treasures. Though we may not ever be inclined to have the most, all of us at times, want more – because there is always someone who has more. Yet, there is so much poverty in the world – when we see those images we think, “I really have a lot.” I have been blessed with material goods. I have been blessed to have such a loving Parish family. I have been blessed with a Savior who died for me.

And when we think about what we have and others have not, it puts our Lord’s words in this text, *“Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted”* into perspective. Why? Because we are a wasteful people. While we may covet more, in all reality we have so much that we can throw away towels that are made of paper and replace them. We can throw away diapers and bottles made of plastic and get new ones without batting an eye. Now I’m not saying that buying paper or plastic materials is sinful and we should not do it. Rather, I’m saying that taking these things that are gifts from our God, wasting them without thought or concern, forgetting from whom and by whom all we have comes is bound to lead us down a path of selfishness and forgetfulness regarding ownership. That is, from whom and by whom all that we have to support this body and life comes. So, let nothing be wasted. For what has been given is given by our Lord.

And so our Lord said, let nothing be wasted to those collecting the leftovers after that great meal that more than 5,000 were guests. *“Let nothing be wasted,”* is what our Lord said. What is so remarkable, and what needs to stand out for us in this text is that there was so much left over after such an abundant and well attended meal. But that is how our Lord works His miracles. There is never “just enough” with our Lord. Rather, with our Lord, there is always more. There will be more for us even tomorrow. There will be food on our tables. There will be people who love us. And if our Lord decides to come sometime between this moment and tomorrow and none of this “stuff” occurs, then there is still more. There is more for us in heaven. There is more for those who love Him and who are loved by Him. There is always more yet to come. That is why we gather the leftovers – there is always more – always an abundance of God’s gracious gifts.

“Let’s see what we can do.” That’s Andrew’s response. And look what he did. More specifically and rightly so, look at what the Lord did. He made leftovers out of a few loaves and a couple of fish. What can you do? Well, if we take Scripture, we know that we, *“can do all things through Him who strengthens us.”* With our Lord there is always more. And as we move closer to that Friday in which we see our Lord crucified and yet still call it good, we rejoice. We rejoice because of the day? Yes! And we rejoice because that Friday *was* and *is* GOOD. It’s good because He won – we won. And today we have all the leftovers in the world. Today we share those leftovers with the world. Today we rejoice in Christ Crucified. Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen