

At Home Worship
July 25, 2021
First Presbyterian Church-Sweetwater

Find a Sacred Space

Sit comfortably, perhaps with something warm to drink, where you can look out on the beauty Of God's creation today. Read aloud or quietly to yourself, or as a family share the various parts of the service.

Greeting - The Lord be with you. **And also, with you.**

Call to Worship and Prayer of Praise

We meet in the name of a Savior who feeds the hungry.

We meet in the name of Christ who fills those who are spiritually hungry.

But our Christ showed concern to feed the literally hungry as well.

For Christ is the fullness of God and in His coming Kingdom every kind of hunger shall be satisfied! Thanks be to God!

O God, in Your merciful love You have always reached out to us, willing to meet our every need if we will but follow You in faith. Help us to have the courage and strength to follow You, Lord. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn

“God Will Take Care of You ”

1. Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you; Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you.

Refrain:

God will take care of you, through every day, o'er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you.

2. Through days of toil when heart doth fail, God will take care of you; When dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you.

Refrain:

God will take care of you, through every day, o'er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you.

4. No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you; Lean, weary one, upon his breast, God will take care of you.

Refrain:

God will take care of you, through every day, o'er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you.

A Time of Confession and Assurance

Lord, how often do we seek Your help only to serve our own desires and do we seek to use You only to try to meet our own wants? Or how often do we limit our vision seeing only the

little worlds we would create for ourselves and not seeing the needs of others or even seeing Your will for us? Forgive us, Lord.. (silent prayer of personal confession).....Amen.

The good news in Christ is that when we face ourselves and God with the awareness of our need, we are given grace to grow, and courage to continue the journey. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn _____ “We Give Thee But Thine Own” #708

1. We give thee but thine own, whate'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.
2. May we thy bounties thus as stewards true receive, and gladly, as thou blessest us, to thee our first fruits give.
3. The captive to release, to God the lost to bring, to teach the way of life and peace: it is a Christ like thing.
4. And we believe thy Word, though dim our faith may be; whate'er for thine we do, O Lord, we do it unto thee.

All You Need Is A Miracle

John 6:1-15

Writer Adele Hooker remembers a point when she and her family were going through some rough times. They had very little to eat, but one day her husband unexpectedly asked some friends over for dinner. Adele was dumbfounded: there was no food in the house! How could she possibly feed guests? So, she went into her bedroom, knelt down and asked God what she could do. As she prayed, she seemed to hear a voice telling her, "You have meat in the freezer." Right. Half a pound of hamburger. That wouldn't go very far. Then she heard, "You have vegetables." One carrot, half an onion, and two stunted potatoes for six people? Not very likely. But the voice told her to make a stew, and to use the rest of her flour for biscuits. Adele still didn't think that there would be enough, but she would try. She would serve the stew to her guests while she and her husband would only eat biscuits and milk.

But that night when the stew was passed around, there was plenty. There was even enough for seconds. And afterwards, when her guests thanked her for the delicious meal, there were actually leftovers. Doesn't that sound kind of familiar? It sounds to me an awful lot like the feeding of the multitude.

It was Passover, and Jesus went up a mountain with his disciples. Now when the people saw Jesus go up the mountain that day, it reminded them of Moses going up the mountain to commune with God. When Moses had come down from the mountain, he carried the Ten Commandments. In the same way, the people expected some kind of miracle from Jesus. So, they followed him.

When he saw how many people there were, Jesus decided he would test one of his disciples. Philip was closest, so Jesus asked him, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" Well, Philip

must have panicked. I would have. He was probably wishing that he had been in the back of the group, instead of standing next to Christ. But he rallied, and answered Jesus the best he could. He said, "Six months wages wouldn't even buy enough bread for each of them to get a taste."

Another of the disciples, Andrew, saw Philip's distress and tried to help. He told Jesus that he had seen a young boy with five barley loaves and two fish. "But what good are they among so many people?" Andrew asked. We can see his point. What is the use of even considering feeding thousands of persons with five barley loaves and two fish? What's the use in even thinking about it?

It's like the story of a little girl in Milwaukee who had had her tonsils out and was staying with her grandmother while her parents were at work. One day she complained of a sore throat.

"I have some holy water from Lourdes that I got from my mother," the grandmother said. "Should I put some on your neck?"

The girl thought for a moment and then asked, "What's the expiration date on it?"

Such skepticism. But unfortunately, that's how most people deal with miracles. Not even the disciples thought in terms of the miraculous. They had forgotten who it was that was with them. Jesus probably smiled sadly at the disciples and their skepticism. Then he took the small amount of bread and fish that they had from the boy, held them up toward heaven and gave thanks to God. Then he distributed them. You know what happened then: everyone had plenty to eat. There were even leftovers.

He Multiplied that Which He Was Given.

But there are some things that we need to see. First of all, Jesus did not create all that bread from nothing. He multiplied what he was given. It was important that the lad made an offering of the bread and the fishes.

Every Sunday afternoon for many years, Rev. William Waffles, a Methodist pastor in Ohio, would go to a nearby prison to conduct services and visit with the men incarcerated there. During these visits, there developed a trusting and loyal relationship between the pastor and his prisoner parishioners.

For some time, the Reverend and his wife had been saving for a trip to the Holy Land. On the Sunday afternoon before they were to leave, he shared with the prisoners this blessing that was his. "We've worked hard and saved, and finally this lifelong dream will soon be ours," he told them. "I won't see you for a couple of weeks," he said; but he assured them of his prayers and concern, even though he would be away. The prisoners were delighted for him. They immediately gathered around and hugged him, patted him on the back, shook his hand, and jostled him lovingly with much attention and camaraderie.

A little later, as the pastor was getting ready to leave, one of the prisoners awkwardly came forward with a package that had been hastily wrapped with a single strand of ribbon. The fellow said, "We didn't have time or money to get you a gift, but we want you to think of us while you are away, and this is the best we can do. Please, don't open it till you get home. Then, when you open it, remember, it's all we have to give you."

The pastor thanked them, prayed for them, and took the package home. He told his wife about how pleased the men seemed to be about the trip and how they had given him this gift. She, too, was delighted, and watched intently as he opened the package. Inside, he found his wallet, his pen, his watch, his glasses case, and his pocket knife. What had happened was this: When the prisoners had gathered around him to offer their congratulations, they had picked his every pocket. And then, wrapping it all up, they gave it back to him as a sign of their love, saying, "It's all we have to give."

The chaplain was pleased with the gift" even if the gift was his in the beginning. In the same way, God waits for us to put something in His hand to work with even though all things are His already. In order for a miracle to happen, we must give of ourselves, our time, and our resources. Even when we don't think we have anything to contribute, if we are at least willing to give of ourselves, then the seemingly impossible becomes possible. Nobody would have said that feeding five thousand people that day was possible. But when that boy offered his seemingly insignificant fare, it became possible. Christ can do so much with so little but, first of all, we need to make our offering.

Notice in the second place that this really was a miracle. This event is not explainable in human terms. There is a more commonplace explanation often cited for the feeding of the five thousand. According to this interpretation, when the people saw the young lad offering his lunch, they all took out their lunches and they had a covered dish meal. This explains why so much was left over. Maybe so, but it is clear that the people who had come up the mountain with Jesus were looking for a sign, and in their hearts and minds they got one. When they realized just what had happened, they wanted to take Jesus by force and make him king. They figured that if he were their king their bellies would always be full, and they would never have to worry about famine again. They wanted to take what they had found and keep it for themselves.

And it's easy for us to fall into this same trap. We have a very bad tendency to think only of our own personal needs and what Jesus can do for us: "Please, Lord, let me get that promotion." "Dear God, please let our baby be a girl." But think about it. When we pray like this, we are only wanting to use Jesus selfishly. Instead of being self-centered, we need to be Christ-centered. Edgar Bacon was a B-24 bomber pilot in World War II and a Christian. Before taking off on one of his crew's last missions, he asked if they would like to have a prayer. But there was an atheist and a young Jewish man on board, so in deference to these two the crew decided to omit the prayer.

The mission turned out to be extremely hazardous. Their plane became badly damaged, and the captain informed his crew that they might not make it back to the base. Then he said, "Now, we're going to have that prayer." After the prayer the crew's engineer tied a safety line to his waist, and very carefully, with great risk, crawled out onto the wing to make repairs. He wasn't able to do much, but he did what he could. And apparently it was enough. After the plane had safely landed at the base, the Jewish boy thanked Captain Bacon for his prayer, and the atheist was no longer an atheist.

That is the right way to use prayer. It was not an attempt to manipulate God, it was not a plea for their lives, it was an honest sharing of concerns with the One who provides all our needs. They prayed, they gave what they could of themselves to get home, and they made it. Miracles do happen, but they are most apt to happen when we have first of all done everything, we can to help

ourselves. They are not an attempt to manipulate God, but an honest sharing of our needs with the One who has promised to never forsake us.

A young man offered fives loaves of bread and two small fish and a miracle occurred. But note one thing more. Christ is the real bread. When we as a church speak of offering bread to a hungry world, we are talking about more than physical bread. We are talking about giving them Christ.

Jerry, a salesman in his thirties, had attended a number of churches, but was not really interested in religion. One summer at a campground he met some people who reached out to him. Jerry had broken up with a young woman several months before and was still feeling hurt. He told his new friends that the relationship "ended very abruptly and with considerable misunderstanding." The people he met at the campground made him feel like he was part of their family. It felt good to be included. After a few days, some of them began sharing their faith with Jerry. He was not greatly impressed, he says, but listened, mainly because they seemed so rational and sincere. Before that week was over his new friends invited Jerry to attend their church in a nearby town. Reluctantly Jerry agreed. On the way to church it happened. "I was driving along toward town when I heard a voice say, 'He is risen,'" Jerry explained.

At church Jerry experienced something he never had before. Jerry found "joy filled faces, heart-warming music, and sincerity." When the invitation to follow Christ was given at the end of the service Jerry went forward "like a child," as he puts it. "I said, 'yes,'" Jerry says. "I saw that Jesus was, and had been, knocking at the door of my life. So, I let him in."

The feeding of the five thousand was an important incident in the life of the church. Each of the gospels mentions the event at least once. When the early church was struggling, they remembered fondly the time when Jesus fed the crowd. They viewed themselves as ones who were taking their small beginnings, their few loaves, and distributing them to the entire world, offering hope to the hopeless, and performing a great miracle of faith.

Miracles are possible. They occur every day. But we must give of ourselves in order for a miracle to occur; they don't just happen. The miracle that God most delights in is when we share Christ with the world. Now, let us break the bread of our faith today, give thanks to God, and distribute it to the multitudes of the world. And the miracle will continue.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn "My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less" #353 VSS 1,2,4

1. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Refrain:

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

2. When darkness seems to hide his face, I rest on his unchanging grace; in every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.

Refrain:

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand

4. When he shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in him be found, dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.

Refrain:

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

Galatians 6:18