

Pentecost 9A. August 6, 2017. Dungeness Valley Lutheran Church, Sequim, WA. Isaiah 55:1-5, Psalm 145, Romans 9:1-5, Matthew 14:13-21  
13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup> When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. <sup>15</sup> When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup> They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." <sup>18</sup> And he said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup> Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup> And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. <sup>21</sup> And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

"We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish."

Nothing but 5 dollars and two cans of tuna.

Nothing but 5 phone calls and two hours of conversation.

Will it be enough?

Will it be enough to feed the family who comes to the food bank? Will it be enough to pay the rent, the car payment, the credit card? Will there be enough time to get everything done? Enough mercy to heal the pain of separation / grief / loneliness / memory loss? Enough commitment to keep the marriage together? Enough faith or enough love?

When someone asked a famous billionaire how much money would be enough, he is reputed to have said, "just a little bit more."

There never seems to be enough.

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Jesus didn't have enough time to grieve. We read, at the beginning of our Gospel lesson, "Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself." What Jesus heard was this: his

cousin John had just been beheaded by King Herod. Terror took hold of the lives of Jesus, the disciples, Mary, and Jesus' and John's families. John the prophet, John who had baptized Jesus, John who had preached repentance to so many. It was a terrible death for a stupid, senseless, vindictive reason – much like the terrorism we hear about daily in the news media – in the Middle East, Africa, and in our own schools, city streets, prisons, and shopping centers.

Jesus and the disciples needed to get away, to retreat, to mourn, to pray, to comfort one another.

But they were interrupted. People like us interrupted Jesus. They brought their sick in body and in mind. They brought their worries, they brought their sadness. Many perhaps hoped Jesus would lead their oppressed, partisan-wracked nation in revolt against the “big government” of Rome that they hated and feared.

And Jesus let himself be interrupted – not to revolt, not to lecture, but to heal, to bless and to feed. Much as a mother lets herself be interrupted for her young children. Jesus saw their hunger and brokenness and showed that God cares and provides -- for both physical and spiritual needs.

The disciples were all too eager to send the people away, to lighten Jesus' load. But “no” says Jesus, “YOU give them something to eat.”

How could there possibly be enough?

It sounds like the seemingly impossible tasks Jesus has given us: to feed the hungry of the world, to share God's word to the world when sometimes we can't even share it with our households, to spread God's hope and joy when sometimes we can't smile for the aches and holes in our own souls.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John ALL tell us what the disciples said, “We can't do it.” The disciples didn't have enough faith to take on the task. But Jesus' faith was sufficient for them all.

Then, the Gospel writer John tells us, someone from the youth group came up to the disciples and said, “Take this. Use it.” Five small buns and chopped fish to spread on them. The disciples may have laughed, but they took the food to Jesus.

Praise God for this young person. Praise his parents who taught him to share. Praise St. John for remembering to write down this boy's story. Praise the Holy Spirit who worked in all of them.

Jesus TOOK the young man's small lunch— just as he accepts the small gifts we bring, the small faith we offer.

Jesus BLESSED the food. He probably said the ancient Jewish prayer, "Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who causes bread to grow from the earth." And so he made holy the gifts brought forward.

Then Jesus BROKE the bread. Divided it up, not to be hoarded or saved, but to be consumed.

Jesus then GAVE the bread to the disciples. Although they had just shown that their faith was weak, Jesus entrusted them with the task of distribution of the bread.

And ALL were fed. Not one of the men, women and children was considered unworthy to receive the blessed meal.

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We take heart when we see ourselves as the hungry crowd in the story. We believe Jesus knows our needs too and can fill US up.

We also see ourselves in the disciples: church people entrusted with the overwhelming yet joyful task of sharing the Gospel, of keeping our church vibrant in the community, of feeding the hungry, and seeking ways to shelter people without homes.

We can see ourselves as the young boy with the lunch – offering to Jesus what we have. Five phone calls and two hours of comforting conversation. \$5 and 2 cans of tuna for the Food Bank. Five minutes of time spent with someone in the belief that no human transaction is trivial.

And we can see ourselves in another way in the story. As the bread. We can ask God to TAKE us, BLESS us, BREAK us and GIVE us to the world. To TAKE us as we are, to take whatever we have to offer – time,

concern, service, love, money – right along with our worries, aches, and indifference.

To BLESS us with God's continued saving grace – so that we need not fear our worries, aches, and indifference.

To BREAK us for distribution -- to break us from our struggle for security, for status, for more things. Break us from the pride that says we can take care of ourselves, that we know what's best, that we don't need this community we call church. In the act of breaking, God can show us our false dependencies and work the miracle of new life, of healing, of forgiveness.

Finally, we ask God to GIVE us – individually, as gift to all whom we encounter, and as community, a witness to our area.

Sometimes we can't pray the prayer: "Take me, bless me, break me and give me to the world." Sometimes we are worn out, like Jesus recoiling from the terror of his cousin's execution. Sometimes we are too busy to withdraw to pray. If you read a few verses further, you will find that, although Jesus allowed himself to be interrupted in this story, he withdrew again later and took the time he needed to pray and meditate. Like Jesus, we rely on God's grace to see us through, yes, but also we withdraw when necessary to pray, to listen, to contemplate.

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Today we ask how we can be taken, blessed, broken and given – for our community, for our world. We wonder how there can be enough for the thousands of children with just 5 small tacos and 2 cans of tuna. Can there be enough for the thousands of refugees fleeing for their lives.

As we gather around the table of the Lord this morning, we hear again how Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it. When we despair of doing enough, having enough faith, conquering our troubles, healing the world, Jesus draws us close and says, "I have faith enough." And we walk away from the table with the profound hope that Jesus can use us to make a difference. We are strengthened to feed one another with generosity, with friendship, and with God's good bounty.

Perhaps an expression of your love today is making an extra offering to the ELCA world hunger appeal or to Lutheran World Relief so that others might

have bread on this earth in the midst of their hunger – and we celebrate your continued gracious and generous support of the Sequim Food Bank. Jesus' faith is sufficient for us all. Amen.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your gift of Holy Communion. Take us, bless us, break us and give us to the world so that more may be fed. Bless the work of all who seek to stop hunger, especially the work of Lutheran World Relief and the work of this congregation. Bless the families who receive the baby layettes we have made, the children who receive the school kits, and the people who receive our food offerings. You have shown us that your work can be done with our hands. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.