

Sermon Text – Sunday, August 2, 2026 – Pastor Paula Kraus

**1st Reading: Isaiah 55:1-5; 2nd Reading: Romans 9:1-5
Scripture for Message: Matthew 14:13-21 “Enough”**

Would it surprise you to learn that the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand is the only miracle story that all four gospels include? It might be told differently but the fact that all the gospel writers thought it was important enough to include in their stories about Jesus is significant. There is a lot to unpack in this story – did it really happen and why did the gospel writers retell it the way they did. When we read this together with God's words to Isaiah that our elder read this morning it enhances the message of God's provisions. God's will is that hungry people are fed, Jesus demonstrated the task for his disciples.

In the Isaiah passage, God includes all in the invitation to “Come, buy and eat!” Although Isaiah describes a banquet of rich food and Jesus supplies the multitudes with a peasant's meal – the comparison is that God's food cannot be bought with money but is available to all who come. Isaiah's message is that even nations that do not know Israel will run to Israel because of God. When Jesus takes the bread and fish and looks up to heaven, he calls on God's blessing to multiply what is available until all are filled. God's blessings are available to all who come.

Let's start at the beginning of the passage from Matthew's gospel. This comes after John the Baptist's followers inform Jesus of his brutal murder at Herod's hands. Jesus withdrew, possibly to mourn the loss of his cousin and friend but also to be alone in prayer with his “father” in heaven. Jesus was travelling, fulfilling his mission by healing the sick and casting out demons – he needed rest and rejuvenation. It was probably only a brief period of time until the crowds caught up to him on foot – but that was enough time for Jesus.

Jesus saw the great crowd and had compassion on them – he was experiencing the same need for comfort and rest, but his mission was to be with them, to meet them with compassion, curing the sick and ministering to their needs. This was an all-day thing and when evening came upon them the disciples too had compassion on the crowds, noticing the late hour they suggested that Jesus send the people to town to find food for themselves. Jesus, however, knew that ministering to the needs of the people also meant feeding their hunger.

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Jesus responded to his disciples, “They need not go away” meaning that staying in community would be enough to supply their needs. In Jesus’ mind, the disciples present could solve the problem of having enough to feed the crowd, the people did not need to leave the table. Jesus put the solution into the hands of the disciples, “You give them something to eat.” The disciples were dismayed at the possibility of feeding the crowds. They were stuck in the physical realm where a young boy’s provision of five loaves and two fishes could not possibly be enough to feed the crowd. For them it was a question of distribution coordination – but with God nothing is impossible. Jesus knew there would be enough because Jesus is enough to supply the needs of his followers.

Jesus, in the wake of John the Baptist’s death, realized how much his followers needed to learn about God’s kingdom so they could take his mission upon themselves in his absence. Now Jesus needed to begin their instructions in earnest – so he demonstrated exactly what it meant to be his disciple and to carry his mission forward by ministering to the needy and feeding the hungry. Through this miracle of the loaves and fishes, Jesus demonstrated to the multitudes that he is enough to supply their needs in contrast to what Herod or the Imperial rule of Rome could do for them.

Jesus told his disciples to give the crowds food – acknowledging that they were the solution to the problem as long as they could see the abundance of Jesus. They, however, responded with fear of insufficiency, attempting to withdraw when they did not feel they had enough. In their limited capacity to “see” the abundance of God, they felt the problem of feeding the crowd was too big to overcome. Even though they witnessed Jesus turn water to wine and raise the dead – they felt inadequate to respond to the needs of the crowd. So, Jesus told them to bring what they had to him, Jesus started the equitable distribution of the bits and pieces of food by sharing them with his disciples who in turn shared with the crowd.

One insight into this story is that we must learn to trust the resources of our community or this church. Rather than seeing scarcity, we must learn to bring our bits and pieces, even our most meager offerings and trust that God will bless what we have. Sometimes the problem seems too big, and we are overwhelmed but if we remain in that frozen state or even if we walk away saying this is too much to deal with – the world

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loses. Jesus says “they need not go away” reminding us to stay at the table and we will find enough. However, if there is hoarding, greed, and waste some will go hungry.

This story is a reminder that God will provide, throughout creation God has provided enough for everybody – if we bring the bits and pieces of what we have to Jesus and remain in community we can experience the abundance of God. If we, however, live in fear of insufficiency or try to solve the problem without God's help some will surely go hungry. It is the grace of God that supplies the need of God's people – the church is called to be God's instrument in meeting the needs of others.

So, we face the question whether the church, the followers of Jesus, could be the solution to the problem of enough in the world? Not only the problem of enough physical or economic resources like food, or income – can the church be the solution to the problem of enough love, mercy, compassion, and justice? There is enough in God's kingdom but only as long as Christians recognize the abundance available through Jesus. The lesson of this story in the gospels is simple – there is enough for everyone's satisfaction even when what we think what we have is only five loaves and two fishes. However, it is through Jesus' blessing and the sharing of our provisions that this happens.

This story reminds us that there is no problem too big that Jesus cannot solve. This story, in my mind, is about more than feeding thousands – it can be about that, but it can also be about fairness and inclusion. No one went hungry, even the women and children – the least of these – were fed. When we think about the leftovers – twelve baskets full was probably a small portion compared to how many people ate to fullness. Given that we know there was very little waste, no one was able to hoard. Just like God's provision of manna to the wandering Israelites, there was enough – this was the daily bread Jesus taught them to pray for.

This can also be a message about the power of prayer – notice before Jesus blessed and broke the bread, he looked heavenward – that was a clear indication of Jesus' petitioning God's participation in the miracle. Our scriptures tell us that “the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” we can see that is true as the prayers of God's only Son and the followers of Jesus are answered with abundant provisions for all.

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When there is a need to fill, when there is what seems like an insurmountable task, bring your bits and pieces to Jesus and pray for God's blessing. Stay at the table and things can work out through our sharing within the community of believers. There is a caveat to this however, God provides and uses what we bring but that is done through us. Notice in this story, Jesus did not conjure up a banquet for the crowds – Jesus increased what they were able to provide so there was enough. The solution to the problem the disciples saw came from the things they already had on hand.

We are, the church is, God's instruments to carry Jesus' mission forward in the world. God calls the church to meet the needs of others ensuring that there is enough for the God's kingdom. That means we cannot turn our backs on the needs of the people thinking the problems are too big to solve. The church must stick around and work out the problems of enough – enough resources, enough love, enough justice, enough compassion – enough for everyone and enough so the world can see through us what being in the kingdom of God looks like. That happens as we trust that God provides enough. That happens through our willingness to be the solution to enough. The church can leave the fear of scarcity and insufficiency behind as we look heavenward and petition God's participation in our mission and ministry.