

King of Glory Lutheran Church  
August 5-6, 2017  
Matthew 14:13-21 *Fed to Feed: Excess or Enough?*  
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

*God feeds us abundantly and gives us everything we need to feed others.*

May God be with us in our speaking, our listening, and our learning in this sacred hour. Amen.

There was a Hallmark card that had a picture on the front of this miracle story. Jesus is pictured, holding up fish and many loaves of bread. The crowd in front of Him is yelling out questions. "Is that bread gluten free?" "Does the fish contain any GMO's?"

I think it's funny because I do eat gluten free. A regular piece of wheat bread isn't enough. We who are used to living with plenty tend to get picky about what we eat.

So in contrast, hear this poem, by David Whyte titled; Enough.

*Enough. These few words are enough.  
If not these words, this breath.  
If not this breath, this sitting here.*

*This opening to the life  
We have refused  
Again and again  
Until now.  
Until now.*

(A Life of Being, Having and Doing Enough. Wayne Muller. Three Rivers Press. New York. 2010. Pg. xi)

Enough. When dinner was over that night on the grassy field, the men lay back on one elbow and smiled. The women had a look of relief on their faces. The children asked if they could be excused and they ran off to play with friends. And Jesus smiled;

everyone, each mouth of those 5000 had been fed; enough. The Good Shepherd had fed His lambs.

It's what Jesus did, you know. God was a provider. Because before the meal, the story says that Jesus saw these crowds and had compassion for them. His heart hurt as He saw their tired eyes and the longing in their faces. There was the man limping from a bum knee, the child with the sprained ankle. Jesus had compassion and He healed them. He cured them. He loved them. And there was ample love and sufficient healing and enough...for each one. What a God!

But then, the disciples, aware it was late, wanted everyone to go away. "They can go buy food, McDonalds is still open." Jesus turned the tables on them. "No. You give them something to eat."

"Uh...Lord. We've only got five bagels and two mackerel." To which Jesus says, "That's enough."

Your dining room when Mother offers seconds. Or the restaurant when the waiter comes back to check on you. "Can I get you anything else?"

And pushing back from the table, what do we say? "No thanks. I've had enough. I'm full. It was plenty."

The story from Matthew chapter 14 verse 20 says, "And all ate and were filled." Each one was satisfied.

We might skim over that verse because most of us usually are. Satisfied. Filled. "Yes, I'll have a to-go box please." But for the folks seated on the hillside, that meal likely was a rare event. To have a full belly, to be fully satisfied, to push back from the table, wasn't normal – it was unusual to have plentiful food.

All ate and were filled. God provides for us, abundantly! Take a moment and reflect upon what God has provided for you; not

only food, but family. Friends. Work. Good doctors. A home. Transportation. Love. A place to worship. Forgiveness of sin. Grace. Any one of these is a blessing, but all together? Oh my! Filled, yes! Twelve baskets, left over? For certain! Oh how God provides – in excess of what we need.

To get them to slow down and be aware of having God's bountiful fill, a pastor offered this exercise to his students. Eat your meal slowly. Savor each bite. Take time to chew. Really taste the flavors. Swallow and pray that God will use the food to nourish your body for activity.

One student after the exercise reflected upon eating a Palisade peach. He said, "Usually I just chew fast. But today, I saw the brilliant colors in the bowl. The juice ran around the pieces. My tongue felt the fuzzy, soft skin while the peach flesh melted in my mouth. I decided that the Kingdom of Heaven was a peach in my bowl." Everyone laughed.

All ate and were filled. It's what we want, right? To be satisfied is our desire. And God provides for our needs. But somewhere along the way in a desire to be satisfied we've moved to think that enough isn't enough and we have to have the 12 baskets left over.

More is better. Not just fast. Faster. Big is fine. Larger is superior. Super-sized is best. Computer speeds. Car accessories. Big Gulp cups. Plate sizes. Enough is not sufficient. Excess is the ultimate. We forget that one beautiful peach in a bowl is perfect. It's enough.

Because it's a matter of perspective, right? The disciples say to Jesus, "We have *nothing here* but five loaves and two fish." Another way to say that is, "We *have* five loaves and two fish!" We get what we're looking for, right?

If we want to see scarcity, we see a lack of what we want. If we want to see abundance, we look for God's provision.

And yet, how many of us are still hungry at the end of the meal? How many of us wonder if there is really going to be adequate provisions for me?

Even here, amongst us, some of us live from paycheck to paycheck. We must calculate if we can afford the loaf of bread and the ground beef. In our community, our brothers and sisters eagerly attend Community Kitchen meals and visit the food pantry at House of Neighborly service. Many people in the world, never have enough. There is never, ever a to-go box.

And as Rev. Matt Skinner points out, Matthew's Gospel doesn't tell us if Jesus provided a second and third meal on the hillside. Was this a one-time occurrence? Perhaps these families went home satisfied one night, but the next day looked into an empty pantry.

That is the reality for about 1 in 9 people worldwide who suffer from chronic undernourishment. (<http://www.worldhunger.org/2015-world-hunger-and-poverty-facts-and-statistics/>) One in nine. Eight have enough food, adequate food, plenty of food. One does not.

So what if God who feeds us, then calls us to feed? From the Bible we only see that Jesus fed them once. Who was to feed the crowds again? He was on to the next town: the next man with a bum knee and the next child with a sprained ankle and the next hungry woman. Jesus was down the road. But who was still there in that place? Those who had been fed.

What if we are fed to in order to feed? What if our excess could be turned into 'enough' for everyone? What if Jesus taught the disciples to see abundance (we have five loaves and two fish!) that we too might trust God provides sufficiently that there will always be leftovers?

If God is a provider, then God gives us what we need. As people of God we can trust, that we have the skills and resources to

provide for others. We can believe we can make a difference in our community.

Here is a secular example of just that belief in action.

*In 1986, McDonald's wanted to open a franchise at the base of the Spanish Steps and Italians were not pleased, so they gathered for a protest. Instead of just waving signs and chanting, they brought a big bowl of penne pasta and handed it out to the crowd that gathered. People shared a meal at the Spanish Steps and began chanting "we don't want fast food, we want Slow Food." That gathering was the foundation for the birth of the Slow Food movement. Its stated mission was to counter the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat and where it comes from.*

*Today, there are 100,000 Slow Food members, working for good, clean and fair food in 150 countries, from Kazakhstan to Mexico. Slow Food is food that's good for us, good for our environment and good for the people who grow, pick and prepare it. In other words, food that is good, clean and fair. In many ways, Slow Food is the opposite of fast food. Slow Food is fresh and healthy, free of pesticides and chemicals, and produced and accessed in a way that's beneficial to all – from the farmer to the eater.*

*([www.slowfoodusa.org/frequently-asked-questions](http://www.slowfoodusa.org/frequently-asked-questions))*

As American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." (www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/margaretme100502.html)

We're all hungry aren't we? We all desire to eat until we're satisfied. God has provided and God trusts we can do the same. When we do, that will be enough. Amen.