

Are you the Boy?

July 24-25, 2021

King of Glory Lutheran

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

Year B: Pentecost 9: John 6:1-21

¹Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ⁹“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” ¹⁰Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

¹⁵When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. ²⁰But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” ²¹Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

The late United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld: "Each morning we must hold out the chalice of our being to receive, to carry, and give back." The scriptures today open a door for us to think about how individuals and communities are nourished and sustained by God, and also imagine how we become vessels of the holy who are now opened to the call of service. How might ordinary gifts (and ordinary people) become the ways God's love and mercy are multiplied in sustenance for neighbor, community, and world? (Sundays and Seasons. 2021. For July 24-25. www.sundaysandseasons.com)

God’s abundant and everlasting love be with us this day. Amen

The faith formation question in the bulletin asked, “What are you hungry for? What are people hungry for?” Tell me some answers. What do you think?

I believe that people are hungry for meaningful relationships. They are hungry for God even if they don’t know it is God they need. People are hungry for food. They are hungry for enough

money to pay all the bills. They are hungry for justice – to be treated fairly, like any human being ought to be treated. People are hungry.

They were hungry in Jesus' day as well. His ministry was becoming increasingly about food. Poor people didn't have access to the food they needed. They followed Jesus wherever He went because He performed signs that made God visible. God was real and God cared about them personally. Jesus taught them, healed them and fed them. They were hungry for God.

But the feeding of the 5,000 would have been different without the ordinary, unnamed boy. Yes, the boy! It was Andrew who tells Jesus, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish." Who was this boy? Did he come from a large family? Barley was a grain of the poor people. Maybe the five loaves were all this boy's family would have for several days?

Of course, we know Jesus would have found a way to feed the crowd, but all the same, perhaps God put the boy in the crowd for the very purpose Jesus had in mind. Jesus used this young boy and his food to feed the thousands. The feast that day would have been very different if this youth had not been there.

The late United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld once said, "Each morning we must hold out the chalice of our being to receive, to carry, and give back."

Listen to that again. "Each morning we must hold out the chalice of our being to receive, to carry, and to give back."

This is what you and I do each weekend in worship. We might arrive to church tired or frustrated or joyful. Whatever state our soul is in, we bring the chalice of our being – the cup – of our soul to receive God's mercy and grace. Here in this place we are nourished with God's Word and God's meal. Then we carry that cup out with us to give back to God's world.

This boy gave back. Jesus took from this young male, the very life-giving bread and fish which belonged to his family. Yet when Jesus multiplied it, those few loaves, fed the multitudes!

How can you and I as individuals, ordinary people, do our part to give back, to feed God's hungry people?

Remember the story of Gander? Gander is a city on the island of Newfoundland, Canada between the state of Maine and Nova Scotia. Its airport was the launch of the first non-stop transatlantic flights and where Amelia Earhart took off. The Gander airport re-fueled planes and was an important airport during WWII.

But Gander has another story to tell. On 9/11 when planes were diverted from landing in the United States, 38 planes were re-directed to Gander airport. 7,000 people, passengers from 90 countries all over the world were stranded at the airport.

The town itself has only a few hundred less than 12,000 people that live there. But about five hours after exhausted passengers were finally allowed off the planes, they were welcomed into the terminal. But there was a party going on in that terminal. Seemingly all the residents of Gander were inside offering food and drink. For the next few days residents took strangers into their own homes. The passengers were fed, clothed, and welcomed.

Now of course 9/11 was an emergency of enormous scale. Every community steps up when it needs to. But the people of Gander didn't have to. With the mayor's call to action, ordinary people fed their fellow human beings. These passengers were tired. They were hungry for food, hungry for a clean bed, for a feeling of security when the world had stopped in its tracks.

The question is this. How can you and I, ordinary people we are, hold out the chalice of our being, or our arms, our dollars, our words, our time to receive, to carry, and give back? Are we the like the people of Gander? Are we the boys and men God will use today? Are we the girls and women to ease another's hunger?

I believe we are! Margaret Mead American Anthropologist once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

And furthermore, Jesus said, "Let your light so shine, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." We can do this!

Right now, here at church, we are in need of people willing to offer an hour or two to keep our property looking nice. First impressions are important. If our property and building look messy, visitors will be turned off. Right now, in our community, mothers need diapers. So on Wednesday night, a group gathered at Zion to package diapers. Right now, in our nation terrible fires are burning. If you go to the ELCA website and find Lutheran Disaster Response, you can donate to "United States Severe Weather." Or you can donate to flooding or hurricanes, or the Middle-East Crisis.

Every week, thanks be to God, we are able to come to this holy and sacred space to refill our empty hearts and chalices. We too are hungry for many things. I know that.

What is the strangest thing about giving back to God, is that our soul gets filled right back up again. When we go to serve, we often find hope given right back to us! Our giving is multiplied just like the bread and loaves! We believe we are doing something good for another, feeding them, to lessen their hunger. When in reality, in our serving, we are fed more than we could ever wish.

When Jesus broke those five loaves and two fish, everyone got more than they needed or wanted. There were baskets left over! This is the way our God works! God lives in abundance!

God has need of us, right now. Are we willing to be the boy? Amen