

July 25, 2021

“More Than Enough”

TEXT: John 6:1-21

Deb Angerman – The Church of the Good Shepherd

I was so excited when Christine told me which Gospel passage was I was to speak on this morning. This miracle – the feeding of the 5000 - is such a big deal that it is the ONLY one mentioned in all four Gospels. I think that’s kind of important because I think we have so much to learn from it.

Whenever I study this particular passage, one of the things that really jumps out at me was how so often we concentrate on what we don’t have.

In our scripture, Jesus asks Philip: Where should we buy the bread for these people to eat? This is a test for Philip – Phillip probably SHOULD have said something like, “Well Jesus, I’ve seen you turn water into wine, and I’ve watched you heal with a word... I don’t want to sound like Satan, but, uhm, couldn’t you just turn these stones into bread?”

But no, he doesn’t say that. Philip actually responds the same way I probably would if we had a special service at the Patriot Center and Christine were to say to me right after she was done speaking “so where we should get food for these 5000 people?” Philip says “What, are you kidding me? Even if there was even a place to buy it (which there’s not) we would need 6 to 8 months wages to just give all these people a tiny bite!”

The other Gospels tells us that Jesus told them to see if there was any food in the crowd and Andrew comes back with this boy who has 2 dried fish and five small barley loaves. It’s not much, but the boy was willing to share with the teacher. And Andrew brings this little boy with his packed lunch as if to say – SEE? I TOLD YOU we don’t have enough.... Because Andrew, like Philip, was focusing on what they didn’t have.

Now – most of us believe that we have *SOMETHING*... but we also believe that it’s not ENOUGH. Like Andrew, we say here’s what we have, but there’s no way this will suffice. It’s not good enough, it’s not strong enough, we don’t have enough time or money... that’s what we think. But are we really the best judges of how much is enough?

Many of you know that I served as a youth pastor in the Methodist Church for many years. When I was hired for that job, I’d only been a Christian for two years. I had been raised in another tradition altogether, and when I was 18 I’d “been there, done that” and was out the door. Twenty years later, I finally came back. When I finally stopped running away from God, I was so happy to be “home” that I jumped right in with both

feet. I was the kind of new Christian that every pastor **dreams** of. I was incapable of saying the word “no”. Need help reading scripture? SURE! Need someone to help out with the Women’s Ministry? ABSOLUTELY! Need someone to help with your church bookkeeping? I’m your guy! It was so bad that one year my cousin gave me a t-shirt on which she had emblazoned “Someone stop me before I volunteer again!”

So, two years into this new life, my pastor made me this crazy job offer – to take over and build up their Student Ministry. And that stopped me cold. I was like, “What are you talking about? I’m a BOOKKEEPER.” I had absolutely no idea how to run much less build a student ministry. I barely understood my own faith, how was I supposed to communicate that to others? **And** – this is how I can truly testify to the fact that God has a sense of humor – I DIDN’T EVEN LIKE TEENAGERS. I was 40 years old, I generally avoided all creatures that travelled in packs, and I had heard horror stories about how teen ministry could suck the very lifeblood right out of you. I came home and ranted and raved at both my husband and God about the fact that this was a super ridiculous idea, until finally my husband pointed out that I’d been praying for two years for God to use me to build the Kingdom, and now you’re saying “This is not what I had in mind! (*Can I see what’s behind door number 3?*)” So, after a lot of prayer and not a little bit of worry, I accepted the job offer, shut down my very successful bookkeeping practice and went to work in a job for which I was completely unsuited and unprepared.

And do you know what I learned? Over the next 13 years? God really DOES equip the called. God gave me exactly what I needed, when I needed it, to fulfill whatever task He put before me. **In God’s hands, I was enough.** I just had to say yes, and let God steer the ship.

Here’s the thing: If Andrew had held on to the two fish and five loaves he would have been absolutely right: there is no way it would have been enough to feed even the disciples, much less 5000 people. He could have shown that little bit of food to Jesus and walked away and that would have been the end of it. But he didn’t. He handed it over to Jesus.

You’ll notice, when he presents it to Jesus, Jesus did not say “Whoa! That’s not enough!” – NO. He takes it, gives thanks for it, and he blessed it, and he begins to distribute it. **And it is MORE than enough.**

I am here to tell you that when you put what you have into the hands of Jesus – EVEN WHEN ALL LOGIC TELLS YOU IT’S NOT ENOUGH – it will become exactly what you need when you need it.

I'm the living, breathing poster child for this. I was called into a ministry with absolutely ZERO experience or training. But Jesus took what I gave him, and multiplied my strengths and talents with other people until it was enough to do the job. And do it well.

Friends, we CANNOT concentrate on what we don't have, or how little we do have, or how little we can do with what we have. **Whatever we have is enough if we place it in the Master's hands.** He'll take what we have, bless it, give it back to us and use it to bless others.

We saw this Miracle of Multiplication happen right here at Good Shepherd during the pandemic. When we were locked down by our state and diocese – we hobbled together a virtual worship experience with the equipment and limited know-how that we had. And God made it enough. Enough to even draw new people to the Body!

We launched new ministries to keep us in touch with each other (telephone, letter-writing) and started a shopping/errands/home repair ministry where those who could be safely out in the world could help those who had to stay in lockdown. Our parishioners wrote over 90 “Moments of Grace” reflections to encourage each other – which was amazing in and of itself. And in God's hands this was MORE than ENOUGH to hold our parish together tightly and continue to serve our community.

All of which leads up to my favorite part of this story, which is found in verse 12

¹² When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.”

After everyone's been fed – SATISFIED even – Jesus tells his disciples to collect all the broken pieces. Friends, Jesus doesn't waste ANYthing. Broken pieces are important to Him. He cares about the leftovers. Let's listen to it again:

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Many a sermon has been preached on this one verse to reflect on the importance of stewardship and conservation. I know. I looked. But this week, I read it differently. I thought about Christ gathering up those fragments, all those leftovers, those things that no one in the crowd wanted any more, and He gathered for a purpose.

I thought... what if WE are the leftovers? What if WE are the broken pieces? Even when we were locked down in our homes, Christ continued to gather all the broken pieces for a purpose.

One thing that happened for a lot of us is that we saved a lot of money by not going out to eat and reducing our shopping to bare necessities – and then we turned around and sunk that money right back into our community. In 2019 this church provided 270 Thanksgiving Baskets and 109 Christmas boxes, and we prepared 3400 meals for the local homeless. Not too shabby, right? That was before the pandemic.

Last year – in the middle of a global pandemic - we provided for over 4000 hot meals, collected 1500 pounds of food for the Food for Others program and donated more school supplies than we have ever done in the past, and we expanded our Thanksgiving Baskets and Christmas Box programs and sent out over \$30,000 in financial assistance to aid individuals and organizations. Now, that's what I'm talkin' about!

As we are slowly moving out of our Covid cocoons and back into the world. I want to encourage you to not fill up your days with mindless busy-ness. Be **intentional** in how you fill up your calendars. Remember that in God's economy there is no waste, and no experience that God deems as wasted.

Some of you, like me, may feel a little fragmented after so many months of solitude. It's HARD to go back out among the people... But Jesus is still gathering, gathering, gathering the pieces. Church of the Good Shepherd has one of the most active and dedicated Outreach committees I have ever seen. Co-led by two amazing Kingdom Builders, who are more than able to help you put your "*faith and love into action serving our neighbors near and far.*" It says so, right there, on the flyer 😊

I want to encourage you, in fact I challenge you, to spend time in the next week praying over how you can help change your corner of the world. It doesn't matter what your physical limitations are, your monetary limitations, what your age is... there's a place for you to change the world. There's a place for you here, at Good Shepherd, to be a Kingdom Builder. So, ask for an Outreach flyer. Check out some of the really transformational mission opportunities we have right here. I can assure you: YOU ARE ENOUGH. In fact, in Jesus's hands you are **more** than enough.

AMEN.