

More Than Enough
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Matthew 14:13-21

13 When Jesus heard about John, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. When the crowds learned this, they followed him on foot from the cities. **14** When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion for them and healed those who were sick. **15** That evening his disciples came and said to him, "This is an isolated place and it's getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves." **16** But Jesus said to them, "There's no need to send them away. You give them something to eat." **17** They replied, "We have nothing here except five loaves of bread and two fish." **18** He said, "Bring them here to me." **19** He ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves of bread and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them and broke the loaves apart and gave them to his disciples. Then the disciples gave them to the crowds. **20** Everyone ate until they were full, and they filled twelve baskets with the leftovers. **21** About five thousand men plus women and children had eaten.

More Than Enough

But, "We have nothing here, except five loaves of bread and two fish"!

Jesus is so unreasonable!

It would have made sense to send the crowds home to feed themselves. After all, this was not a planned gathering. In the gospel of Matthew this story comes right after the story of the death of Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. In verse 13, where we began our reading, Jesus decided to take a break to grieve for John, so he got in a boat and rowed himself out to the middle of nowhere, but the crowds found him anyway. So Jesus just gives up on his bereavement leave and goes back to teaching the crowds.

The whole situation is unreasonable. Jesus really should have held his boundaries and asked the Disciples to take care of the crowd while he slipped away for some much needed grief work, but Jesus was unreasonably focused on his ministry. So in typical unreasonable Jesus fashion, when it was getting late, Jesus asked the Disciples to get the crowd something to eat.

In the middle of nowhere.

In a totally unplanned situation.

So of course, the disciples said, "But, We have nothing here, except five loaves of bread and two fish!"

I can so very much relate to the Disciple's frustration, because, in my humble opinion, God is still completely unreasonable.

Jesus gave us - the church, a mission to go and make disciples and teach them to obey everything that Jesus taught (Mt 28:20), including loving our neighbors (Mt 22:39), especially loving "the least of these" in a tangible way by meeting their basic needs (Mt 25:40)...

...Jesus gave us - the church, this unreasonable mission to transform the world with love. Jesus gave this huge mission to us(???) - a rag-tag bunch of ordinary people with limited resources and a pretty average skill set.

And there's plenty of times I've found myself echoing the words of Moses, when God called him - Are you sure God? Are you really sure you want me? I don't think you realize just how unqualified I really am.

But God says to us, what God said to Moses. I'm sure and I'll send your siblings with you. It's comforting that we have each other, right? But still, God is soooo unreasonable...if we think that God is asking us to do it ourselves.

Bring what you have

In the face of God's unreasonable ask, we all want to say, "But, We have nothing here!" In this post-Christian, politically divisive, forever changed by the pandemic, era when the vast majority of churches are growing older and smaller it only makes sense to respond to God's unreasonable ask with:

"But God! We have nothing... except:

A building

Some money

A lot of stuff, some more useful than others!

And ourselves

But Jesus says to us what he said to the Disciples, "Bring them here to me."

I think that all too often, we - the church, get stuck in a scarcity mindset.

Scarcity, as in, not enough.

We keep thinking that we don't have

enough money,

enough people,

a good enough pastor,

enough support from the larger church,

enough respect in the community,

enough younger people....

We keep thinking we don't have enough to do what *we* think "successful ministry *should* look like".

And we're right, *we* don't have enough to ever be the nostalgic vision of a successful church that we imagine we're supposed to be.

More Than Enough to do what God has called us to do

But we do have everything we need to do the ministry that God is actually calling us to do here and now, if we are willing to bring what we have.

When we bring our small offering of loaves and fishes to Jesus.

When we bring our small offering of:

an old building,

some land,

a relationships with Family Promise, Eccumenical Ministires of Oregon, METBA, the Red Cross,
local schools, and others
a little bit of money,
a pile of stuff... some of it more useful than others,
the support of our Annual Conference,
and our ordinary selves...
It is more than enough for God to do the ministry that God wants to do in this community.

And remember, God is unreasonable!
God did not give us a reasonable mission to be a nice, quiet, respectable church who takes care
of their own.
God gave a huge mission to make disciples of ALL People, even the ones who make us
uncomfortable. And let's be honest, a lot of people make us uncomfortable:
people we don't know,
people from different cultures,
people with different lifestyles,
people of different ages
Shoot, there are days when I make myself uncomfortable!
so this is not just an unreasonable mission, it's an uncomfortable mission!
But wait, there's more!
The mission is also to teach these new disciples everything Jesus taught us, even the things
that make us uncomfortable.
Like caring for the "least of these," even when we find their behavior off-putting;
or loving our neighbors enough to work for more just policies and systems, even when the
current system works pretty well for us.

This mission isn't just unreasonable! It's impossible...if we think we need to do it all ourselves.

Instead, Jesus asks us, "bring what you have."
Bring what you have, and watch God multiply it.

And I know this feels risky!
When we feel like saying, "But God, we have nothing, except this building and grounds, a little
bit of money, a few friends, a pile of stuff and ourselves!"

But if we don't bring it to God. If we try to keep what little we have for ourselves, and just take
care of one another, then soon what we have will run out. The money will run out, the building
will fall into disrepair, and most importantly, the church will die of old age. That's the point of the
Parable of the Talents, (Mt 25:14-30) God expects the church to produce a return on
investment. Or as Billie Holiday put it, "them that's got shall get and them that's not shall lose."
If we do bring what little we have and invest it in God, then God will do surprising things.
I don't know what yet.
You all get to decide how you give what you have to God... or not.

But I do know that if we share what little we have with God, God will make it more than enough to do the ministry that God wants to do here in Montavilla.
And I trust that whatever God does, will be good.