

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

August 6, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Genesis 32: 22-31

Responsive Reading; Psalm 17: 1-8

Epistle Reading; Romans 9: 1-5

Gospel Reading; Mathew 14: 13-21

Sermon Title: **You Give Them Something to Eat**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; Trust yourself to do, and trust God to help you do it.

Every now and then I read a scripture that I have read hundreds of times before and I suddenly see something that I never noticed before. This week is no exception. My sermon title is You Give Them Something to Eat.

My take on this scripture was always that Jesus FED the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. This is the first time it registered to me that acutely the disciples fed the five thousand.

Follow where I'm going here. Jesus had just spent a busy day healing and teaching and the disciples pointed out to Jesus that it was late and the people needed to eat. Jesus did not say, "That's OK, I got this covered." Jesus said, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." You give them something to eat.

Then Jesus had the crowd sit down. He took the five loaves and two fish. He blessed the food and then He gave the bread and fish to the disciples. THEN the disciples fed the five thousand plus women and children. YOU give them something to eat.

This account is so important that it appears in all four gospels.

My mother, saint that she was, said that she believed that when the kid pulled out the five loaves and two fish everyone else dug into their pockets and also contributed. I love you Mom but you are dead wrong. In the gospel of John, the crowd follows Jesus the next day and Jesus said, "You do not follow me because you saw signs, but because your stomachs were filled." If they had been fed by mutual action of the multitude, they would not need Jesus for food. Jesus provided the magnified meal by His own miracle. The crowds proved this when they followed Jesus the next day to get an encore performance.

OK, why is it so important that the disciples did the actual feeding of the crowd?

Let's deconstruct the scriptures for today and see what kind of God we are dealing with.

In Genesis we find a scoundrel named Jacob wrestling with God, or at least an angel of God. The name Jacob means "supplanter" or con-man. Although Jacob is losing the fight he won't let go until this angel blesses him. God, or this angel, changes Jacob's name to Israel. Israel means "one who strives with God" or "a prince of God". Jacob, now Israel, has his hip put out of joint. If you strive with God it is going to leave a mark. I can attest to that myself. You will never be quite the same.

The point is that God can change anyone who is willing to take the time and effort to go one-on-one with God.

In our Psalm reading David is going one-on-one with God. David pleads his case, not that he is perfect, but in this instance, he has done nothing wrong and wants God to intercede for him because David knows he can trust God. "I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; Incline your ear to me, and hear my speech. O You who save those who trust in you from those who rise up against them."

The point is that God will hear you when you call on Him in faith.

Next, we come to our Epistle. Here we see Paul reeling in grief. Much like our present state of affairs, Paul's beloved country is blessed beyond measure and is blowing it. Israel was the chosen people. God gave them Abraham, Isaac and the patriarchs. God rescued them from Egypt and gave them the laws of Moses to lead them into a promised land and then gave His only begotten son to give His life for their ransom. Then, they threw away the privilege by not accepting the gift of salvation through Jesus. Paul felt so bad for his country men that he would have given up his own salvation if it could cause them to allow Jesus to save them.

I guess the point here is that we live in a messed-up world and look for some way to change the direction of mankind.

This is where our Gospel tells us how we can make some inroads on making this come true.

**YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT.**

You give them the love that you learned from Jesus. You give them the smile that lifts their day. You give them a sandwich. You give them an ear to hear their concerns. You give them a touch, or a hand shake, or a hug. You be there for them.

**YOU trust God to provide and YOU trust yourself to deliver.**

YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT. God is relying on you and trusts you as Jesus trusted His disciples. You can do it for Jesus because He has done it for you.

Hallelujah and Amen!