



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN!

Our Gospel reading today, the feeding of the 5000, is the only miracle that appears in all 4 Gospels. No parable or other miracle gets noticed by all four of our Gospel writers. So, what is so special about this miracle that it appears four times in the Bible?

Maybe it is that fact that it is a miracle that happens to 5000 men plus women and children. It was not just a single healing or awakening that Jesus performed on one person, but rather many, many, 5000 plus saw what Jesus was up to. Or maybe it is because the miracle fills one of the basic needs of our existence, food. We all know what it is like to have lunch or to be in a place where there is no lunch. Well, I personally think it was important because everyone can relate to the little boy in our story. The one who came prepared with lunch. The one whose mom made sure that he was prepared for a day of fishing.

This morning, I want to do something a bit different and look at this story from the perspective of the little boy, whose lunch was central to the miracle. There will be no specific word for the day as was true the last couple of Sundays.

Imagine with me for a few minutes, how this little boy who was probably around 10 or 12 years old, understood what his day was going to be like. He jumped out of bed in the morning and told his mom he was going to meet some friends down at the sea for fishing. Can't you just see him with a fishing pole over his shoulder and a pail and net in the other hand going off to meet his buddies for a day of fun? As he walks out the door mom asks if he took a lunch. Awwwww mom, comes the objection to this idea. He would probably not want to be the only one that came with a lunch. But mom insists and puts together a meager lunch of 5 little loaves of bread and two fish.

I bet the loaves of bread were more the size of buns. The fish was some sort of pickled or salted fish. It maybe was last week's catch that had been preserved in salt. Hopefully it was not soaked in lye like the stinky lutefisk where I come from! Mom gets this insignificant lunch ready and puts it in a basket.

Now I don't know about you but when my kids were little a basket would not have worked. It had to be Barney or Sesame Street lunchbox, guess I am showing my age, or today I suppose it is another hero figure. But now our little boy is ready to go on his way. He had barley bread, which was a staple in poor families at that time and the fish was not the fish we would like today, a nice tuna steak, or piece of salmon or tilapia. Just simple fish probably a lot more like sardines.

Leaving the house now for the second time the boy is probably muttering to himself, because all his friends are going to make fun of him when they see that his mother made him bring his lunch. And I know that we have all been there before.

On his way to meet his buddies, he sees this large crowd gathering and he speaks up and asks what is going on. Why is there such an enormous crowd of grownups all going the same direction? An older adult points out that the guy up in the front is Jesus of Nazareth. Our young lad has actually heard of him. He recalls his mother talking about a guy who is a good teacher and goes around healing people. Rather intrigued, the young boy forgets about meeting his friends and tries to get closer to Jesus to hear what he is saying. Struggling to get close to the front, he wiggles his way through a jungle of arms and legs. He is close enough now to listen to Jesus talk about love and forgiveness. Then he even sees a blind man get healed and a crippled lady walk again. Pretty soon, he realizes that he forgot about his friends.

Opps, but it is too late now to go to find his friends, practically the whole day is nearly gone. He stays to hear more of the stories Jesus is telling. But then there is a pause in the action.

Jesus and about a dozen men go off to the side for a conference, away from the crowd. Our little boy wonders what they are talking about and what is going to happen next. The twelve men around Jesus start walking through the crowds as if they are looking for something. Maybe they want to find another person for Jesus to perform a miracle on, or maybe they are searching for someone who is lost. Suddenly, as the boy is watching the action in the crowd, someone touches him on his shoulder.

Well, this gets our lads attention. It was one of the men that was a friend of Jesus who is now talking to him. Later on, he found out this man's name was Andrew, and he asks our boy what is in the basket. He tells him that it is his lunch. Andrew looks into the basket and finds the 5 barley loaves and the two fish. By now that meal consists of soggy bread and warm slimy fish. Mom did not have Baggies back then or Tupperware to separate the two items. Andrew sees the fixings for a soggy sardine sandwich. But something about the lunch must have been appealing to the man and he asks the boy to come with him. The little boy is excited yet confused as to why he and his lunch are making their way toward Jesus.

He is now directly in front of Jesus. Andrew tells Jesus that this boy has 5 barley loaves and two fish. Jesus takes his lunch and says thanks to God for the food and then gets those twelve men to pass out his lunch to the crowd. I can just see the little fellow standing there with his mouth wide open in amazement, with what just happened. Jesus has just taken his salty sardine sandwich and turned it into food enough for all the people gathered, to eat. WOW! Wait until his friends hear about this! And mom would surely not believe when he told her what happened. But good thing he took a lunch!

Our lad was probably confused and yet amazed with what happened to his lunch. Scared at first to go up to meet Jesus and then rather proud that his lunch was good enough to feed this huge crowd. Then when everyone finished eating there were even leftovers, leftovers far greater than his lunch was in the beginning. No one was going to believe this story.

So, what are we to learn from this story, this miracle? The little boy perspective is fun to think about. In fact, it is in John's gospel only that we hear it is a boy's lunch. The other three gospels do not mention where the 5 loaves and 2 fish came from. With the boy in the picture, we can only imagine, how he must have felt. How insignificant his lunch was yet how important to all those people.

This miracle to me is about what happens when we place ourselves, or our lunch, in the hands of God. This little boy had a sardine sandwich that would not even make it at our potlucks of today, yet it fed thousands. In the hands of God, it was more than enough.

A few points we can glean from this story.

First, don't ever think that what you have or who you are is insignificant or unimportant. And I am not talking about lunch here. Each one of us possesses gifts from God. They may be the gift of organization, the gift of listening, the gift of being cheerful. If God can use this boy's soggy sardine sandwich, just think of what he can do with you and all the gifts he gave you at your birth. With Christ all things are possible. So never ever think that you have nothing to offer God's family. Something as simple as a smile can work wonders in someone's heart when given with the love of Christ.

So not only should we not think that we are insignificant and unimportant in God's eyes, but secondly, we need to see that Jesus can use us, just like he used the little boy with his lunch to do great things. God can work miracles in us, you, and me. In fact, He wants to work in our hearts. His desire is for us to know Him and work with Him to fulfill His mission in the world.

What mission you ask? Well, we have a lovey banner here at Christ the Servant, to remind us of our mission statement, "Christians Serving God by Serving Others." We are all called to serve the least, the lost and the lowly. Jesus wants us all to know the love of God and share it with everyone we meet. Now that does not sound too hard, does it? Jesus came to earth to show us the way; through the stories of His miracles, like the one we heard this morning.

Our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross to give us life abundantly. God loves us so much that He sent his only Son to save us from our sin and give love and hope to a broken world. Such love is mirrored by Jesus' 12 disciples when they went out to do God's work in the world. That is the same love that is ours to give away to everyone we meet.

You don't have to go out this afternoon and be a hero. You have all seen such scenes like a burning car on the evening news where someone saved the child that was strapped in the car. Or last week where a father and husband gave his life at a Trump rally to shelter his wife and child. Hopefully, we won't have the chance to help someone in that sort of way. But, accidents do happen. Yet, we are always able to do something nice for someone else.

We are tempted of course, to think that we cannot make a difference in this world. We will never be one of those heroes that have a claim to fame and fortune. But I believe that for every hero in the spotlight there are hundreds of servants of Christ in the shadows. They may not fit our image of a hero because they are too normal. The day care worker that starts her day praying that the children will get to her safely. The mechanic at the local fix it shop, that prays as he works on the van that will carry youth safely on a mission trip. The youngster that mows your lawn for \$25 and gives half to the homeless shelter and saves half for college so he can be your next pastor. The teacher who encourages a child to learn, who goes on to be a doctor that finds the cure for cancer. They are all around us. Some would call them heroes but in actuality they are servants, called to be God's hands in this too often broken world. They don't get accolades and sometimes not even "thank yous". And the press core may not recognize them because their story is not sensational enough. Yet, they are all oh so important.

Look in your mirror tomorrow morning and you might find one of these unsung servants. Because little is much when God is in the middle of it. Nothing is too ordinary for God to make it spectacular.

Jesus wants us, with our soggy lunches and all. He wants you as he made you to be. God wants you, just as you are. And God makes no mistakes. He will use you to heal pain, share the good news of the resurrection and offer His love to others. You are important to Jesus, and he can do wonderful things through you if you just submit to his endless love.

I heard this story from a substitute preacher at St Olaf years ago. You may have heard the story of the young man who was on vacation near the ocean. It is one of my favorites. He got up early one morning to go out for a run on the beach. As he started stretching, he saw an elderly man bending over and picking up something from the sand and tossing it into the ocean. The young man watched for a while and then realized what the older gentleman was doing. He was tossing starfish back into the water. As he got closer to the old man, he noticed that there were hundreds of starfish washed up on shore. It must have been a high tide, and the fish did not make it back into the water. Without water they would die, so the man was bending over and picking them up one by one and tossing them back into the ocean gently.

As the young man neared the older man, he called out and asked, "It won't matter so why even bother with those starfish, there are hundreds of them, and you cannot possibly get them all back into the water before they die. The old man heard him as he leaned over to pick up another starfish and toss it back into the ocean. And then he said with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, "It made a difference to that one."

Yes, it is that simple. I don't know what God is calling you to do or what it will look like. But I do know that God is calling you to share the love of Jesus Christ in some special and unique way. He is calling each of us to live out that love of Christ here on earth.

So be open to listen for God's call. Be expecting to hear from God. Be willing to follow where He leads you. Give God all you have to offer, even if it is only a soggy sardine sandwich and he will do marvelous things through you. AMEN