

2 Samuel 11:1-15  
Psalm 14  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
John 6:1-21

The scripture lessons that we've just heard make me think of a children's game that I still enjoy playing with my grandchildren. It's called dot-to-dot. You're all familiar with it, I'm sure. You probably played it when you were a kid yourself. There's an arrangement of dots, each with a number, and you are to draw a straight line from one numbered dot to the next. When you're finished, a picture will emerge from what seemed to be a random assortment of dots. As we connect the dots in our scripture passages for this morning, let's see what kind of picture emerges.

I suspect that you have noticed that we are no longer following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark; we have switched to the Gospel of John. As you know, the Gospel of John tends to emphasize the divinity of Jesus rather than his humanity which might be a useful thing to keep in mind as we venture into this Gospel for the next six weeks. These Gospel lessons over the next few weeks are often referred to as the 'Bread of Life' scriptures. They are all about abundant life through Jesus who is the Eucharist itself, the Holy Bread, the Bread of Life. And this abundant life that we all seek is not something that can be captured, but something that is freely given.

When our gospel lesson begins this morning, Jesus and the disciples have gone to the other side of the Sea of Galilee even though a large crowd keeps following them. Jesus goes up the mountain and sits down with his disciples, but the crowd follows them up the mountain. Jesus sees the crowd headed toward them and his first thought is to ask Philip where they could buy bread to feed all these people because there were about 5000 of them. It's a rhetorical question that Philip tries to answer literally. Jesus already knows what he's going to do and how he is going to feed these people. Now Andrew has discovered a little boy with two fish and five loaves of bread. What good will they do in the face of so many to feed? It's not nearly enough, but Jesus doesn't bat an eye. He tells his disciples to have them all sit down. It's hard to imagine what 5000 people sitting down in groups on the grass might look like. Surely they would fill up all the lawn that St. Paul's has...front and back...and would probably spill out into the street. The disciples must have felt bewildered because they know that 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread are not nearly enough. And don't we so often feel that way ourselves? The little bit that we have is not nearly enough to solve the problem, or meet the needs of the homeless, or provide health care for the many who do not have it. What are we to do? The lesson that we learn in this story is that "When placed in the hands of Jesus, human weakness and finitude become more than

enough.” When we offer up what we have and place it in the hands of Jesus, it becomes more than enough. It becomes abundant life in ways we never dreamt. And Jesus promptly gives it away. The leftovers from this miraculous meal filled twelve baskets. Jesus asked that the fragments be gathered up so that nothing would be lost. In God’s economy, everything is used and everything is used up. There’s always enough. And often extra to spare.

But the people were not satisfied just to receive this marvelous gift...the bread of life. They recognized Jesus as the prophet who was to come into the world...the Messiah they had been told about all their lives...the One they had been looking for. And they wanted to capture Jesus and make him king, but Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself to escape the crowds. What the people had in mind for Jesus and what Jesus knew about his mission were very different. What Jesus did for them...to feed them with seemingly little to nothing...was something that was simply a part of who he is. It wasn’t everything even though the people thought that if they could just put him on the throne, if they could capture him for their own ends, all would be well and they would never be hungry again. And don’t we so frequently want to use Jesus for our own ends? We want his power, but for our purposes which are not necessarily his.

At the end of the day, while Jesus is still at the top of the mountain, the disciples get back in the boat and head again across the Sea of Galilee...this time to Capernaum. A storm comes up and Jesus begins to walk across the Sea headed toward their boat. The sea is rough and the waves of water are crashing against the boat when the disciples see Jesus walking toward them on the surface of the water. He identifies himself with the same words that God had used to identify himself to Moses in the Old Testament: “ego eimi” I AM. He tells them not to be afraid. The disciples try to capture Jesus and pull him into the boat to be with them, but as they are struggling to do this, the boat reaches land. They are not successful in capturing Jesus.

We are not strangers to overwhelming need in the face of limited resources. We know what that feels like. It is easy to look at the sheer magnitude of a problem and the small resources we have and ask the question, “What good will it do?” “How can this possibly help?” to It’s easy to focus on the fact that this is not nearly enough.

And yet, historically, we know of any number of transforming ministries that have started with very little to answer the needs of very many. Love is what fueled the passion to try. Mother Teresa started the Missionaries of Charity, an order with just thirteen members, to tend to those suffering and dying in Calcutta. It was a dream fueled by love and in the decades that followed the order grew to thousands of members caring for orphans and those in charity centers. Love multiplies what we see as meager resources and makes a way forward.

The same can be seen in Habitat for Humanity founded in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller. With a few tools and a group of volunteers, they began building decent homes for the working poor. It would have been easy for them to simply stop before they started. How could a handful of people even make the slightest dent in the need for affordable housing? And yet their passion for justice that was grounded in the incarnation of Jesus compelled them to move forward...to take that first and second and third step. Today, Habitat for Humanity is an international organization providing hundreds of families each year with a decent place to live.

There are those in need all around us. We are small and our resources are limited, but given the open hearts and open minds and open hands, we can begin with that first 'drop in the bucket' to make a difference. In the hands of Jesus, little can become more than enough, the few can become many, and the timid and weak can become strong.

The power that Jesus brought into the world is nothing less than the power of God. In that incarnation, Jesus has shown us the compassion and generosity of a loving God. But this power comes with a warning label. Jesus refused to be captured and made king by the throng he had just fed and he refused to get in the boat with his disciples. This passage makes it very clear that Jesus is not to be co-opted by human desire no matter how sincere or how lofty the goals. Jesus is not a concept that 'works' for humanity. Jesus is the incarnation of God that lives among us.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN.