



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

Our Gospel reading for today is one we have heard many times since our Sunday school days. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is a story we could understand even in childhood. It has an important lesson for us and is told in all four Gospels. But even though you could understand it as a child, you might realize that its meaning goes way deeper for us today.

Jesus gave a free meal to the crowd. And why does he do that? To recruit us to be His followers or possibly to convert skeptics? Personally, I think it is simply a show of God's love for all people. And Jesus being the embodiment of that love is there to make sure everyone is fed.

The disciples do not even see that a scarcity can be turned into an abundance when God is in control. Jesus presented and gave thanks to His Father for the meager meal of 5 loaves and 2 fish. God multiplied the food so that there was so much that there were 12 baskets full left over.

Interesting to realize that 12 is a very important Biblical number. There were 12 tribes of Israel and 12 disciples. The number 12 seems to indicate a kind of spiritual completeness. And the fact that the leftovers were collected was different than we see in the manna story in the wilderness. Moses instructed the Israelites to eat their fill and then the left over manna would rot before the next day. Here I think that the abundance of the leftovers especially in contrast with the small quantity of food with which Jesus started, emphasized the grand scope of this miracle. There is no mention on the part of the crowd that this miracle had taken place. Nor was there any wonderment on the part

of the disciples even though they realized that Jesus multiplied the little bit of food that they brought to him.

Also, did you ever think of the fact that Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it and give it out. He gave only the loaves, not the fish to the great crowd. A Eucharistic meal perhaps? Certainly seems to have all the characteristics of the feast we will celebrate in just a few minutes. Our Holy Communion is a miracle as well.

Another interesting thing in this miracle story is that Jesus uses his disciples to share the meal. Remember they wanted to send the people away to find food elsewhere. But Jesus multiplies the 5 loaves and then gives it to them to deliver. Jesus transformed the disciples from skeptics to sacramental servants. This miracle is truly a teaching moment for the disciples and for us. We too should be sharing what God has given us with others. Yes, we get fed ourselves but then it is our call to share God's love with our neighbors.

Do you all know who Matt Damon is? He is an actor, screen play writer and director, that is probably at least to me, best know for playing the character Jason Bourne in the Bourne trilogy. It was a series of movies that starred Matt Damon as the title character that lost his memory and does not know who he is or what he has done. But Damon has done many other projects in Hollywood and is always a box office smash and one of the highest grossing actors of all time.

Because of his work on and off the silver screen, Matt Damon is in the spotlight quite often. Not only has Damon made his name on the Hollywood walk of fame but one of the best things he has done is to create and work with the H2O Africa Foundation. In 2006 when he was in Africa producing and narrating a documentary called "Running the Sahara", he notice the need for clean water. Everywhere he went in Africa, he observed a thirst for clean drinking water. And so seeing the need, he and his production team created a charity to accompany their filmmaking expedition in Africa. The charity is still doing good work today to help people get the clean drinking water that was so scarce. And Damon has gone on to work as a spokesman for Feeding America and to work with other programs that provide for people in need.

Matt Damon saw, he was touched by the need, the scarcity of water or the scarcity of food and did something about it. Not everyone that is touched by such a need can do great things about it. Celebrities often times have more

power than we do to fix someone else's problems, to create abundance out of scarcity.

Several of our women come to the Lord's Cupboard on Wednesdays at noon to lend a hand to those who are food insecure in our community. They pack bags of food to be sent to the homes of school children whose parents are having trouble providing nutritious meals for their children during this tough time. So because food is scarce in homes, we can do a small part in helping to provide food, especially for the children. In our great country of such abundance, there should never be a child that goes to bed hungry!

So folks, I am here to tell you that there is such a thing as a free lunch. I know I grew up in a household where that cliché was used often to instill in me and my sister that we had to work for everything we got. But, there was a free lunch that day for the crowd of over 5000 people. There is still free lunch today available even in Park Falls to those who need it. And the greatest meal that is free to us was bought and paid for with the blood of Jesus. Our Savior died a horrible death on a cross, was buried and rose again to give us forgiveness, abundant life and eternal life. Talk about an awesome free meal with gifts galore.

I will never forget our Free Brat day with the St Olaf outreach committee. We decided that we were going to offer free brats to the community so we put up signs around town. The local gas station allowed us to put a tent up in their parking lot and we threw out a big sign saying FREE Brats. We had dozens and dozens of brats the congregation donated. All we had to do was cook them and then keep them warm. One of the gals got donations of buns and condiments.

It was an amazing experience, amazing to see how shy people were to come to the tent to get a Free brat. And when they did come almost every single person asked how much. Well, free is free. We did not even have a donation box. We simply said we were from St Olaf Lutheran Church and wanted to share the love of God with anyone who wanted to eat a brat. People were suspicious. Something for nothing with no strings attached. There is Free lunch if you look for it.

Today, we will celebrate a meal together at the table of our Lord Jesus Christ. He sees our need, has compassion on us and has prepared for us a banquet of his body and blood that is abundantly available and free for all. There is no charge. We only need to come to the table believing in Jesus and believing in

the promise of forgiveness of sins, eternal and abundant life. How did Jesus do that?

Jesus blessed, Jesus broke and He gave it out. We don't know how this miracle was accomplished but we do know that Jesus continues to bless, and break and pass to all of his followers. Not only with the bread and fish but also in the bread and wine. There is always enough to go around. Our God is a God of great abundance. There are always leftovers. 12 basket full.

And so that is our faith lesson for the day. We have a God of abundance not scarcity. His cup of blessings is always half full. Yes, there will be need in the world and we should respond with abundance as Jesus did. Acknowledge that God, by His grace is the source of all blessings. And there will always be enough to share with our neighbor. God is good all the time. All the time God is good. **AMEN**