

“Life in a Pressure Cooker”

Date: July 26, 2015

Text: John 6:1-15

Theme: Stress, Trust

Place: Lakewood UMC

Occasion: Pentecost 9, Year B

Is there anybody here under pressure? Do you ever feel like you live in a pressure cooker? Did you know it takes longer to cook food at higher altitudes, because at higher elevations the air pressure is so much lower than in the lower plains?

Because of that, the boiling point of water is lower, thus taking much longer to cook food. But in a pressure cooker, higher pressures are built up within the vessel, which raises the boiling point of water, and food can be cooked within minutes.

Here’s something else that’s fascinating about a pressure cooker. Pressure cooking foods can help you maintain a healthier lifestyle. Because it’s a closed system, very few vitamins and minerals are lost to the cooking water or evaporated into the air. Vegetables are not exposed to oxygen, and therefore they retain their vitamins, minerals and color.

The reason that fascinates me is because sometimes life really is just like a pressure cooker. If we respond to pressure in the right way it can make us better and stronger people. Now, even the disciples knew what it was like to be under pressure.

In today’s passage, the disciples were with Jesus facing a crowd of 5,000 men; that doesn’t even include the women and children. Scholars estimate at a minimum the crowd probably numbered between 15,000 and 20,000 people.

Jesus senses that they're hungry; it's late in the day. So Jesus turns to Philip, who happens to be from the area, and asks him, "Where shall we buy bread that these people may eat?" Now Jesus knew what he was going to do, but he was testing Philip.

At that point, do you think Philip felt any pressure? Do you think Jesus put him in a pressure cooker? You better believe it. Well, life can be a pressure cooker. And there are times when *you're* under a lot of pressure and *you* don't really know what to do.

All of us can learn that pressure can be turned into a positive force, if we respond the right way. A pressure cooker puts food under pressure, with some amazing results – faster cooking time, better looking food, and healthier food to eat. Likewise, we can use pressure to our advantage.

Jesus performed a miracle on the hillside of Galilee to teach us what to do when the pressure is on. There were actually two things missing that day. The first problem was the crowd lacked food, and there were a lot of them, 5,000 men alone, crowd estimates of up to 20,000 people if you include the women and children.

Where were they going to find enough food to feed that many people? Philip was a very practical guy. He sized up the situation very quickly, using the facts at hand. First of all there was no place around to buy that much food.

Second, even if there was a place, they didn't have enough money. Third, even if they had the money, they didn't have enough time to get it done. And fourth, even if there was enough time everybody would only get a little bit of food.

Philip was a pragmatic guy. He was thinking logically. He did a cost analysis, a time study and a crowd estimate and he came to the conclusion - the job couldn't be done. The evidence was clear, this job was too big for them, send the people home.

But there was a second thing that was missing that day. There was a bigger problem than the lack of food, and that was the disciples lacked faith. They couldn't see how the problem could be solved, so they gave up. I am convinced that Jesus was more concerned about their lack of faith than he was the shortage of food.

Andrew did a little better than Phillip. While Philip was running his fingers over the calculator, Andrew went off looking for food. Here's what he finds – a little boy with a lunch of 5 barley loaves and two small fish. He still didn't think it was possible

Where Philip said "impossible," Andrew said "illogical." Both of these men made one fatal flaw – they had both calculated without Christ. They never included Jesus in their equations. We do the same thing all the time.

Unfortunately, whenever the pressure is on, the Lord Jesus becomes our last resort instead of our first resource. A lack of food wasn't going to stop Jesus, but a lack of faith stopped him in his tracks. I think it broke his heart when Jesus saw their lack of faith, after her had given them so many reasons to believe in Him.

A lot of us still don't get it. Even though we can all look back on our lives and see how God has provided for us time after time, we just don't get it. When the pressure is on, the worry meter goes up. Jesus invites us to have faith.

If you're facing a situation you think is impossible, then remember Luke 18:27: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." If you're facing a problem and you think the solution is illogical, then just remember Isaiah 55:9: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." You see, what seems ridiculous to you is reasonable with God.

My first point is this – pressure tests our faith in Jesus. My second point is simply this – pressure turns our focus to Jesus. The little boy who offered his lunch to Jesus is the biggest hero of the day, next to Jesus of course. He was willing to share what he had with Jesus. It wasn't much – five little pieces of bread and two sardines.

But what that little boy had was valuable, because it was available. Twelve grown men, followers of Jesus, who had seen him perform miracle after miracle, doubted what the Lord could do. The little boy who had never met Jesus trusted him, believed in him, and offered what he had.

There is one area in which every one of us ought to remain just like a child, and that is in the area of faith. Do you know what's wrong with a lot of older Christians? When it comes to faith, we've gotten too big for our britches. We doubt what God can do.

The little boy had the right focus. Where the disciples saw a lack of food, he saw the Lord Jesus. Where they saw a multitude, he saw a miracle. Where they saw a crowd, he saw Christ. Dear friends, never doubt what God can do. God is in the miracle business.

Now, remember with me how the story ends. After Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fish, and after everyone had finished eating, nobody could eat another bite. And yet there were twelve baskets left over. Why? **Because Jesus is not only all that you need, He is more than you need.**

There is not a problem you have Jesus cannot solve. There is not a hunger you have Jesus cannot satisfy. There is not a thirst you have Jesus cannot meet. There is not a hurt you have that Jesus cannot heal. There is not a question you have Jesus cannot answer.

That is why when the pressure is on, we need to turn our focus to Jesus, and know that the Lord Jesus will help you meet that situation, no matter how much pressure you're feeling.

So the next time the pressure is on, remember it is testing your faith in Jesus, and it is meant to turn your focus to Him. And it will remind you about a fact of who Jesus is: God will satisfy all of your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Acknowledgements to Rev. James Merritt, "When the Pressure is On."