

## Sermon for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost - Sunday, August 2, 2020

preached at Zion Lutheran Church, Lebanon and based on  
Isaiah 55:1-5; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21 (Feeding of the 5,000)  
Yesterday was our 11th Wedding Anniversary!

The disciples thought they had a solution to the problem that had presented itself.

Followers of Jesus have always thought that they knew better than Jesus did.

Whether the problem is the hatred of racism, the arrogance of politicians, or  
the selfishness of individuals, human beings think that they know better than  
God does.

After all it took God 6 whole days to create everything, couldn't God have been a bit  
more efficient, combined some of his work so that we could all have a whole weekend  
to rest instead of just the Sabbath Day.

A comedian in the past has commented that God made a few mistakes when he created  
things. Like the fact when God made the peach, God made the pit too big. That  
captures the human arrogance that I am talking about.

You can read all about it in The Good Book. The people of Israel had to learn to trust  
God and to trust what God wanted them to do. Whether your name was Moses or David,  
Rachel or Rahab, trusting in God to guide you has always been a challenge for we  
human beings.

Today, in Matthew Chapter 14, we have Matthew's version of what happened by the  
side of the sea, when it was late in the day and the people were hungry, and there was a  
great crowd to feed. I am mean, those disciples probably thought about just ordering  
some pizzas to be delivered (**stop and smile**) but they decided to tell Jesus to just send  
the people away to get their own supper.

Jesus had another idea, didn't he? What did Jesus do? Jesus told them to give the  
people something to eat. Then, the disciples started to panic. They thought they had  
given Jesus the right advice but Jesus pulled a 180 on them. The disciples must have  
looked at Jesus like he was crazy, saying, **"WHAT? ARE YOU NUTS? WE ONLY**

**GOT 5 LOAVES OF BREAD AND TWO FISH.** Jesus said, Bring it. Then Jesus told the people to sit down. Now. Wait for it. Wait for it.

Remember that it is from Gospel Writer Luke that we learn that these loaves and fishes came from a generous little boy who was compelled to share his lunch.

Jesus takes the bread, looks up to heaven and blesses the bread and then Jesus gives the bread to the disciples to distribute. Please note that no tongs were used in the distribution. Jesus would have ended any pandemic in an instant anyway, just saying. Everyone ate their fill and the disciples gathered up how many baskets full of crusts? And how many people ate that day? Suffice it to say, quite a few. In short, it was a miracle. One of many that Jesus performed in his day.

**This meal that Jesus provided that day, Jesus has continued to provide.** As you all know, Jesus prepared a table of love for all people. And forgiveness and eternal life are given to all people who receive it according to one German monk named Martin Luther about 500 years ago now. This holy meal has indeed sustained human beings in their faith for centuries because it is God's idea and not ours.

This holy meal will sustain you through any darkness you might face. The community that gathers around this meal, wherever it gathers, is a community that is flawed and fallible, just like the human beings that make up its members. Let me ask you all this, my friends in the faith, **Why does this God community seem so fractured and confused these days?** Is the age old problem rising to the top again? Is the brokenness of our human sin overwhelming us once again? Are people trying to figure out life and country and community without turning to and relying on God for guidance and wisdom? I think we all know the answer to this question.

The prophet Isaiah, in chapter 55 today, spins out a wonderful picture of a great feast that God is preparing for all nations and peoples. God's covenant which started with the people of Israel, this covenant is now expanded to be for all peoples.

God's love for the Israelites and for David, is an everlasting agreement that will be like a giant magnet for human beings who search for meaning and truth and purpose for their lives. David was a witness of God's love to the nations. And the nations will come to study and learn about that love.

The missionary giant who is Paul of Tarsus, whose life was dramatically changed on the Damascus Road, by the way, you can read about that moment in Acts Chapter 9, Paul writes an eloquent letter that describes Israel's place in God's saving plan. Israel's heritage and legacy includes being God's children, having God's covenants, being given God's law and participating in the worship of God and receiving God's promises. You wonder why there is still fighting over land in the Middle East. Remember that in 1947 the United Nations took land from the Palestinians and gave it to the Jewish people as a homeland because the world felt so bad about what Hitler's Nazi Regime had done to them.

But let me not get distracted at this moment.

Make no mistake in understanding.

This love of God did and this love of God can, and this love of God does, overcome all challenges to its supremacy.

This love of God transcends the ages. This love triumphs over all hatred and violence. This love forgives all. Sees all. Accepts all. Bears all things. Endures all things. This love never ends. You remember Paul's words from his letter to the Christians in Corinth, don't you?

So, in conclusion today.

When you think like the disciples that you know what to do. Do a gut check first. W-W-J-D...remember those bracelets, long ago before there was such a thing as text messaging abbreviations. Think, say it with me will you?

**WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?**

So, when you are trying to figure out current events. When you are listening to the stupid things that some politicians say. When you are talking to your neighbor. When you are on Social Media. When they talk about transgendered people. When they talk about this pandemic and wearing masks. About the police's use of force. About the racism that has so upset our diverse land of freedom. Please remember what our designated Psalm for today, Psalm 145 says:

**THE LORD IS GRACIOUS AND FULL OF COMPASSION, SLOW TO ANGER AND ABOUNDING IN STEADFAST LOVE.**

Psalm 145 also says:

**THE EYES OF ALL WAIT UPON YOU, O LORD AND YOU GIVE THEM THEIR FOOD IN DUE SEASON.**

Come to the table of the Lord and be fed. Just like those people who sat down in that field that day so long ago. Amen.