THE ORIGINAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

A Sermon Delivered on July 18, 2021

John 6:1-14 “Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand”

***Sustaining Miracles***

I got a humorous birthday card from a friend who appreciates that I am in the faith business. The card shows Jesus standing up in front of a large crowd. He is holding up a loaf and a fish. People in the crowd start shouting out complaints. One says, “I can’t eat that. I’m a vegan.” Another says, “Has that fish been tested for mercury?” And, “Is that bread gluten-free.”

This is the way of the world. You try to help but people’s needs are so specific, so unique, so demanding, it makes you want to give up on trying to make miracles happen.

The turning point in the story happens when the disciples tell Jesus, “There are so many people. There is not enough.” That prompts Jesus to find a miracle in five loaves and two fish.

Jesus shows us that miracles begin with faith. He has everyone sit down in the cool grass and centers them in a prayer for grace. The bread is broken. The fish is distributed. Gathering around a simple meal offered with grace transforms strangers into loved ones.

We can only imagine who was in that cast of thousands. Were they people of different ages races, languages, and religions? How many different backgrounds, employments and personal histories and points of view did they represent?

The Apostle Paul went on to say, “There is one loaf, one body. Though there are many of us, we all share from the same loaf.” Jesus was onto something here with the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. When God’s love is present, just a little is enough.

Here is another humorous thought. Did you know they serve something like 300 million “Filet-O’-Fish” sandwiches every year? That’s like 822,000 bread and fish meals a day. Coming in at 379 calories, that’s not the best, but it would get you through.

And, not only that, they are all harvested from wild Alaskan Pollock. They claim it is very sustainable. What does it mean to have a sustainable miracle? Jesus was on to something big!

As individuals we have unique needs. Will God provide? In a miracle meal, we experience the love of God as one in community with others, who all have their unique needs as well. We stand together, or sit in the grass together, in need of prayer. In need of amazing grace.

Though we are all different, don’t we all long for acceptance and belonging? The presence of Jesus comes with amazing power and possibility to serve the crowd well. To trust in Christ means we move from focusing on what we lack towards building a sustainable community.

It’s not just about you! It’s not just about me! It’s about sustaining a loving community. Jesus shows us that when we are tempted to say, “We don’t have enough!” that love will sustain us. Love finds a way to reach what seems unreachable.

So this is our takeaway from the story of the loaves and the fishes. In the hands of Jesus just a little becomes enough. Where our human knowledge ends, God’s knowledge begins.

Yes, each of us have so many unique needs. In God’s love we are all being sustained.

In God’s love we have an amazing grace that never stops giving, never stops amazing!

May the world be ready to receive a miracle today! Or at least a fish sandwich to start. Amen.

PRAYERS

Let us take a moment to be in silent prayer to lift our concerns to God in the Spirit.

Dear God, thank you for receiving our prayers we lift to you today. May you bless all those that we carry in our hearts that they may receive your mercy and be sustained in your miracles of love and faith.

Oh Lord we see the struggles in society and we can despair at the great needs. It is too much for us. How can we serve others and serve you well? When you look down at us from heaven, do you see how the nations eat each other up, the peoples in contention for control?

Forgive us our unbelief. Let your miracles happen amongst all the people of the world.

May there be relief for the poor.

May there be peace for those in conflict.

May there be acceptance for those who’ve been denied.

May there be healing for those who are hurt, or sick, or dying.

Oh Lord, restore the fortunes of your people.

By your Holy Spirit, meet us, and sustain us in your love.

Empower us to share in your miracle making here on earth.

Let our smaller words and actions be a part of your greater love to serve the world.

In your holy name we pray, Amen.