

Psalm 23

Mark 6:30-44

October 5, 2014

World Communion Sunday

Preached by Philip Gladden at the Wallace Presbyterian Church, Wallace, NC

Tell Me the Stories of Jesus
SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE GOT

Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

“Send them away so that they may go to the Piggly Wiggly or Food Lion and buy for themselves something to eat.”

“You give them something to eat!”

“Are we supposed to go and buy enough bread and fish to feed this crowd?”

Suppose that’s exactly what we decided we should do. We’re going to Food Lion to buy enough bread and fish to feed 5000 men.

Let’s make out our shopping list:

A loaf of Wonder Bread has about 20 slices, enough for 10 sandwiches. OK, at a minimum we’ll need 500 loaves of bread. Food Lion has it advertised for \$2.49 a loaf. That comes to \$1,245.

What kind of fish are we going to get? Well, tilapia is very popular these days (and some people think that’s the kind of fish the people might have eaten in Jesus’ day). OK, a single serving of tilapia is a 4 oz. fillet, so that’s four fillets in one pound. So, we’ll need 1250 pounds of tilapia. Food Lion is advertising tilapia at \$4.99 a pound. That comes to \$6,237.50.

That should do it: 2 slices of Wonder Bread and a 4 oz. tilapia fillet per person X 5000 men comes to a total of \$7,482.50 + 2% North Carolina food tax = \$7,632.15.

But wait a minute! That’s just the menu to feed 5000 **men**. What about the women and children? Do some quick math — it can’t hurt to overestimate, we don’t want anyone to go hungry. Figure one woman and two children for each man, let’s see, that comes to 20,000 people! OK, now the total grocery bill is \$30,528.60!

That’s a lot of money. Maybe we can’t feed the women and children. But do you really think the men are going to be satisfied with two slices of bread and a 4 oz. fillet? Better double the amount! That will be \$14,724.30. But can we really neglect the women and children? Shouldn’t we buy enough for everybody to have two helpings? \$58,897.20! Whoa! Even if you made \$107,000 a year, that would be 200 days of wages, just for four pieces of bread and 8 oz. of tilapia per person!

Do you really expect us to do that, Jesus? Do you **really** expect us to do that, Jesus?

And Jesus said to them (And Jesus says to us), “How many loaves do you have? Go and see. Show me what you’ve got.”

Well, Jesus, we've got these two little pennies. But what can you do with two little pennies? What difference could that possibly make?

What about the quarterly P.A.T.H. offering that we take up on the first Sunday of March, June, September, and December? In some places, the offering is called 2¢ Per Meal. That's 6¢ Per Day or \$21.90 per year per person.

The 2013 annual statistical report showed Wallace Presbyterian Church with 334 members — times \$21.90 per member = \$7,314.60.

The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina has approximately 27,500 members — times \$21.90 per member = \$602,250.

The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. has approximately 1,760,200 members — times \$21.90 per member = \$38,548,380 per year. That's enough to feed 13,080,000 people four slices of Wonder Bread and 8 oz. of tilapia — all from two little pennies dropped in a jar at each meal.

Do you really expect us to do that, Jesus? Do you **really** expect us to do that, Jesus?

And Jesus said to them (And Jesus says to us), "How many loaves do you have? Go and see. Show me what you've got."

When they found out, they said, "Five, and two fish."

The questions begin to creep in:

How can we possibly do what you're asking us to do, Jesus?

Where will the money come from?

What's the point when there is so much need out there?

What if we don't have enough?

Is this really a good time to do what you're calling us to do, Jesus?

When **is** a good time to do ministry and mission? Well, people will always need to hear God's Word. And there are plenty of hungry people in the world. So, any time is a good time to do ministry and mission. We simply have to decide whether or not we're going to see how many loaves and fishes we have and then turn them over to the Lord.

In one of her books about Presbyterian missions, Marj Carpenter, a former moderator of the General Assembly, says that one of her pet peeves in the church is when people say, "Well, we want to give to missions, and we really believe in missions, but now isn't a good time to give to mission."

Marj writes about visiting the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon in 1989 for their 125th anniversary. There were parades and concerts and worship services and banquets. On Sunday, there were 40,000 people at the worship service. She writes, "I knew we had done something right in Cameroon."

On the plane ride back to the States, she got to thinking about when the Presbyterian Church sent missionaries to Cameroon. She did the math: 1989 - 125 = 1864! She says, "Now you talk about a time that wasn't a good time — that's when Presbyterians were killing Presbyterians and brothers were killing brothers in our country."

When she got home, she looked in the minutes of the 1864 General Assembly and found the “Foreign Missions Report,” which read, “The world is watching us in our travail to see if we’re serious about the global mission and the Great Commission.” The report named the three missionaries who were sent to Cameroon. She also looked at the minutes of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederacy. Under the “Foreign Missions Report” she found this entry: “Our backs are to the wall and our homes are being burned and our churches destroyed, but we must send another missionary to Brazil.” The missionary was named.

Marj Carpenter writes, “It was the worst of times in the history of our country. So I don’t want to hear the words, ‘Now is not a good time.’”¹

“You give them something to eat. How many loaves do you have? Go and see. Show me what you’ve got.”

“Really, Jesus? **Really?** Well, OK, here’s what we’ve got. It’s not much. Just five loaves of bread and a couple of fish. What difference will that make, Jesus?”

Taking the five loaves and the two fish,
he looked up to heaven,
and blessed and broke the loaves,
and gave them to his disciples to set before the people,
and he divided the fish among them all.
And all ate and were filled.

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread,
and after blessing it he broke it,
gave it to them,
and said, “Take; this is my body.”

Then he took a cup,
and after giving thanks he gave it to them,
and all of them drank from it.

He said, “This is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many.” (Mark 14:22-24)

And Jesus said to them (And Jesus says to us), “How many loaves do you have? Go and see. Show me what you’ve got.”

*When at this table I receive a blessing,
the broken bread, the wine of life for me,
then let me share the peace with you, my neighbor,
and let the Spirit set our spirits free.*

*If at this table I have need of healing,
unbidden grief, relationship gone wrong,
then let me know the hands of God enfolding,
and let lament become believing song.*

*If at this table I forget the hungry,
the dispossessed and warfare's spreading stain,
then let this bread become the bread of judgment,
this wine the sharp awareness of that pain.*

*If at this table I make dedication
to give my life in serving what is good,
then let my center be where God invites me,
and show the words of Jesus understood.*

*What faith I have, I bring to join this table,
what hope I hold, in Christ is taught and true;
with brothers, sisters, I will share the blessing,
the feast where God is making all things new.²*

NOTES

¹Marj Carpenter, "Now Is Not a Good Time," from *To the Ends of the Earth: Mission Stories From Around the World* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1995), pp. 39-42.

²*Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal*, Hymn #537, "When at This Table."

Let us pray: Loving God, there were twelve baskets of leftovers; one for each disciple to take and share with others. As you did with Jesus' disciples, equip us as his disciples today. Give us the gifts of your grace that we need. Multiply our efforts beyond our imagining. You have done it before. We pray you would do it again. Get us ready for your service. Use what we bring. Help us to share what you give. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.