

KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



John 6:1-15

Jesus Gave Thanks

I want you to imagine that you were one of the disciples with Jesus before the miracle in our Gospel Lesson. We know the outcome, but they hadn't seen the miracle yet. Jesus had five small barley loaves and two small fish. He didn't have enough food to feed the 12 disciples. What was going through their minds when he "gave thanks" for the food? *What is he thankful for? There isn't enough! Is he thankful that he's about to get to eat but the rest of us will be hungry?*

Jesus gave thanks *before* the problem was solved. I'd like you to think about that this morning. Often we think about being thankful *after* we have achieved our expected goal. We are thankful when we get the right job, have enough money, pass the test, or recover from the illness. The problem needs to be gone before we feel thankful. But maybe we can learn something from Jesus about being thankful.

From last Sunday's Gospel Lesson, we know that Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to get away from the crowds. He wanted some quiet time with his disciples to discuss with them what had happened when they went out to the towns and villages to preach.

But the crowds were not interested in leaving Jesus alone with his disciples. They followed on foot and met Jesus when he arrived at the other side of the lake.

From last Sunday's Gospel Lesson we know that Jesus reacted to this intrusion with patience and kindness. Rather than get upset that people ignored his plans, he saw the crowd as people in need and taught them.

In the account from today's Gospel Lesson, Jesus asked Philip "**Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?**" John adds the comment that Jesus already knew the solution, but wanted to test his disciples.

Jesus made a problem for his disciples. He proposed that "we" should buy the bread. He didn't expect the crowd to solve the problem and feed themselves, but he expected the disciples to feed them. The problem was huge. "**Eight months wages would not buy enough for each one to have bite!**" Philip answered. A solution was difficult to envision.

Andrew offered the five small loaves of bread and two small fish. It didn't solve the problem. So what went through the minds of the disciples when Jesus responded by telling them to have the crowd sit down and then gave thanks for such an insignificant amount of food? I suppose we'll never know, and speculating isn't the job of a pastor. But the lesson was clear.

Five thousand men (far more people actually) and a few loaves of bread and two fish equal a huge problem. And Jesus intentionally thrust this problem into the laps of his disciples. He didn't tell them what he knew. He knew the solution, but they didn't.

Jesus wanted them to see the situation the way he did. Five thousand people plus a few loaves and fish equal a problem. But 5,000 people plus a few loaves and fish *plus Jesus* is not a problem. Jesus wanted his disciples to learn to add that last part to the equation.

Think of why you aren't thankful in the midst of a problem or situation that you don't like. From our perspective it might even make sense. A crummy job doesn't seem like a reason to be thankful. Nor do lots of bills. Or a broken heart. Or unfulfilled dreams. Or an uncertain future. Add any of us to any of those situations and it would seem to equal a problem or heartache.

The part of the equation that we forget in those moments is Jesus. Like the disciples had every reason to be overwhelmed by feeding that many

people, our problems are too much for us to handle by ourselves.

There was only one solution for the disciples. There were no grocery stores or food truck in the area. They needed Jesus to solve their problem. Could it be that Jesus intentionally let this dilemma arise to teach them a lesson about faith? John says he was testing them!

Could it be that Jesus does the same with us? Does he lead us into situations where we cannot help ourselves or solve our problems because he wants us to trust in him? When life is easy and problems are few we have a tendency to forget about God. Our priorities shift to focus on earthly matters — enjoyment and our personal plans and goals. Because Jesus is so loving and so unwilling to let us turn away from him, he graciously creates situations in our lives when we have to rely solely on him.

Jesus' life was about making good out of evil. The evil he had to address was the our sins. Our worldly, selfish goals reveal hearts that can forget God. We tend to make excuses for these sins, but to God there is no excuse. Our lack of love for him and others is a sin that must be punished.

To solve this problem Jesus had to die. He would be punished in our place. While the cross was horrible and Jesus' death was humiliating, it was the best news ever. In his death, we find forgiveness and eternal life.

For the next few Sunday's our Gospel Lessons will be the conversations that took place after the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus made it very clear that he was interested in more than just giving people food. He wanted them to have spiritual peace. At the end of today's Gospel Lesson we hear the comment that Jesus withdrew from the crowd because he knew **"they intended to come and make him king by force."** His focus is on the eternal.

The cross of Jesus is more than a Sunday School answer to a Bible question. The cross of Jesus shapes the Christian's life. The cross is proof that our God is constantly twisting problems into blessings. He is filled with such love for us that he helps us in spite of our failures. In Psalm 119, the Psalmist writes, **"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees. . . . It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."**

Jesus leads us into those moments when the only answer is prayer and faith because more than he wants you to succeed at your job or become rich, he wants you to trust him. If a problem will get your attention and focus your faith, he loves you enough to do what is for your eternal good.

Pick your problem. It may be the ills in our society, a problem that you have with another person, a heartache, or a personal weakness that you cannot overcome. Might it be that God allows that in your life so that you don't forget your intense need for him? Even the problems that linger for far longer than we want can serve to lift our eyes up to Jesus on a daily basis.

Which brings us back to Jesus giving thanks for far too little food to feed even the disciples; certainly not the huge crowd. There was a powerful lesson in the problem. Jesus was thankful for it.

You too can be thankful for the situations you face that may not be what you'd like. God loves you enough to lead you there and he loves you enough to support you through the trial. Look to the cross — always. It is the assurance of forgiveness. The cross of Jesus is proof of God's love and means that your life is important to him. Be thankful for that blessing. Amen.

Pentecost 10
August 2, 2015

