

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost - Year A

20th Sunday of Quarantine (21st overall)

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 55:1-5

Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:13-21

08/02/2020

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew:

13Now when Jesus heard [about the beheading of John the Baptist], he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 15When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." 17They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." 18And

he said, “Bring them here to me.” 19Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The Gospel of our Lord

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **Misconceptions**

Good morning! I love cars. If you’ve spent any amount of time with me, that’s probably obvious. But what you probably don’t know is that my first car was something special. I had my dad's old truck for about two weeks after I got my license, but I don’t really consider that my first “vehicle.” No, my first car was a 1996 Buick Roadmaster!



*Pastor Tim's Buick several years later after it was sold to a friend.*

It was my grandfather's daily vehicle before he died, and since my grandma had her Cadillac, it was just sitting around, not being used. I still have the brochure from the dealer when he went to get it! (*shows camera the car*)

Now, the defining feature of the old Roadmaster was obviously the elegant wood paneling. And I'll be honest, I didn't like it at first, but that 4,000 lb beast worked its way into my heart. The unfortunate thing was that everyone was always so caught up with the wood paneling that they never saw the greatness that lay underneath. Beneath the hood of my beloved wagon beat 350 cubic inches of Chevy small block V-8 power. This rear wheel drive machine wasn't going to win any handling awards, but she certainly had enough "go" in a straight line. So, with the tires smoking, I gave more than a few cars a surprise.

But as I said, the fact that it was a giant wood paneled station wagon always distracted people from the more important stuff underneath. Our text today is similarly distracting. When it comes to the "feeding of the five thousand," we tend to focus on the wrong thing; we want to know if or how it happened. The great Douglas R.A. Hare writes *"Because we are children of the Enlightenment, we tend to focus attention on the question, Did it really happen? Various proposals have been made to "explain" the miracle. According to the most popular of these, people are so moved by Jesus' generosity... that they brought forth the food they had hidden in clothing or travel pouches, and it was discovered that, by sharing, there was sufficient for all. Another suggestion is that the meal was symbolic*

*and spiritual; not physical but spiritual hunger was satisfied when each person received a minuscule fragment of the shared food... it is best to bracket out the question of historicity and ask instead what theological meaning the narrative held..."*

I mean, I get it. I'm just as guilty as the next person in trying to imagine what really happened. But I think it only hurts us in the long run, it pulls us away from the deeper truth within the story. I will say this though, of all the miracle stories in the Gospels, this is the only one that shows up in all four... certainly something to think about...

So when we put aside a question that isn't meant to be answered, what are we left with? A powerful story of God providing. And its place in the story is interesting. After the session of parables last week, Jesus visits his hometown where he is rejected. After this the Gospel of Matthew leaves Jesus and we learn of the death of John the Baptist. (the guy right here in this icon.) And it's in the midst of this rejection and pain that our story takes place. Which is interesting, at a moment when it seems to be pretty rough, something astounding happens. The text tells us that 5,000 men were fed, the women and children aren't counted. This means that, as Dr. Hare argues, this story should be called "The Feeding of the Twenty Thousand." To put that in perspective, that's enough people to fill up the

Hampton Roads Coliseum twice. Or, if you're a local soccer fan, it's enough people to fill up the entire stadium where D.C. United plays in Washington, D.C.

Which brings us to the meal itself. I always had a tendency to connect the story to a eucharist celebration, but Hare points out something interesting: *"Bread and fish constituted the basic ingredients of a peasant's meal in Galilee. Jesus' miracle provides no cooked dishes, no luxurious fruit, no wine! It directs attention, therefore, not to the future and its superabundance but to the present, when God's providential care can be counted on to supply the bare necessities."*

You see, it's easy for us to look back at the story and get caught up in the promises that the resurrection gives, or the celebration of bread and wine that is so central to our worship (and which we sadly cannot enjoy right now). But to do this ignores that God's promise is about so much more! Our lectionary did a great job in picking the texts for today, because I have to imagine that those beautiful words from Isaiah were on the minds of everyone who ate with Jesus: *"1Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not*

*satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. 3Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. 4See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. 5See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.”*

You see, God provides, through the work of Jesus Christ and his disciples God does more than just provide spiritual healing and protection. God makes sure that the most basic needs of God's people are provided for. Now, if you're wondering about all those who still need those basic things, think about this: maybe YOU'RE the one called to be Christ to someone else. So, what are you going to do? Amen.