

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

II Kings 4:42-44

Psalm 145:10-18

Ephesians 3:14-21

John 6:1-21

07/28/2024

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

1 Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2 A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 5 When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. 7 Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" 10 Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five

barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.” 15 When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. 16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20 But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” 21 Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

The Gospel of Our Lord

Prayer

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

Amen.

Feeding

Good morning! We’re jumping right into the text this morning! So any embarrassing stories of mine will have to wait until some other time. Our Gospel story today is certainly an important one. When asking someone on the street to name a story about Jesus this would certainly make it in the top 10. The challenge, as I have mentioned before with other popular stories, is that sometimes familiarity can lead to boredom. (Which is pretty crazy to think about when it comes to a story like this!) The story is so popular that it’s the only miracle, or sign, as the writer of the Gospel of John calls them, that shows up in all four Gospels. Something about this

event was so central to the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ that all four writers included it. Today we will take a look and see if we can figure out why. My seminary Greek professor, Dr. Brian K. Peterson, has written a commentary on workingpreacher.org regarding this text, and I will be borrowing from his exceptional work.¹

One of the first things to remember is that when you look at the end of the Gospel of John, you won't get the traditional institution of the Lord's Supper during the final meal in the upper room with the disciples. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke Jesus celebrates the Passover with the disciples and is then arrested. It is there that Jesus says those words of hope and grace that we recite every time we take part in communion. Instead, in the Gospel of John Jesus washes the disciples' feet. So scholars have done some searching and noticed an interesting detail in our story today. As Dr. Peterson writes, "*Jesus' action over the bread is described with the verb *eucharisteo*, 'give thanks,' rather than the Synoptic Gospels' 'blessing.'*" The language here is the same as what we see in the other Gospels during the Last Supper. Something about this meal reminded the Gospel writer of John of the Eucharist meal. Another detail for us to wonder about.

The next detail was something I have somehow missed all these years. We read the following in verse 4: "*Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.*" It seems like a strange detail to include. Paper wasn't cheap, and so writers made each line count. So why include a detail like this? Again, Dr. Peterson saves the day. He writes: "*At the end of chapter 5, Jesus complained that his opponents did not understand or believe what Moses had written (John 5:39-47). We then are ushered immediately into*

¹<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-17-2/commentary-on-john-61-21-2>

a scene that not only takes place at Passover, one of the great events associated with Moses, but into a text that overflows with echoes of the Passover event.”

Here are some of those details:

1. *“At the beginning of chapter 6, events of supernatural feeding and of salvation from the sea are joined together, just as the crossing of the sea and the manna in the wilderness were part of the story of Moses.”*
2. *“There is “testing” here (John 6:6), as there was in Exodus 16:4.”*
3. *“Jesus commands that the pieces be gathered up so that nothing is wasted, just as Moses commanded in Exodus 16:19.”*
4. *“Jesus is said to go up “to the mountain” (notice that it is not simply “a” mountain in verse 3). In fact, the text strangely says that after the feeding, Jesus (again?) withdrew “to the mountain” (verse 15). Perhaps this repeated mention of “the mountain” (another piece unique to John’s account) is intended to recall that other mountain in Israel’s story, where Moses met God.”*
5. *“The people will grumble (verse 41), just as Israel did in the wilderness (Exodus 16:2).”*

The story is rich with connections to the past, and not just any past. The Exodus/Passover story was by far the central story of faith and identity for the Jewish people. And here in the Gospel of John we are shown a story rich with connections to that central event.

Which brings us to the feeding itself. There are two widely accepted theories. The first is that Jesus did in fact perform some sort of “sign” or miracle. In an expression of his divinity, he somehow multiplied the bread and the fish and fed the five thousand people. The second theory is that when the crowd saw the boy share his food, they were inspired to share

what they had too. That when all was said and done, when the gifts had been collected, twelve baskets were full with food to share with those who needed it.

If you ask me which one I believe... my answer would probably change each time. But I can tell you this. Today is the first time I have preached since July 7th, and so I've had some time to think about the text. But since the workshop we did with Pastor John Wertz a few weeks ago, I couldn't help but think of a certain small food forest growing outside our doors. Just like the few loaves and fishes that were given to Jesus by a young boy, what's growing outside might seem like a small gift now, but man, what might that grow to become? How many might be fed from God's work through our hands? Well... I guess only time will tell. Amen.