

## Hayward United Methodist Church

### Pastor Samuel's Message for Ninth Sunday After Pentecost, July 25, 2021

**"In the Master's Hands"**

**Text: John 6:1-14**

#### **Gospel Reading: John 6:8-14**

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here, who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people? 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. 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. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 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."

#### **Prayer for Illumination (UMH 6)**

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

What do you have to bring to Jesus? In most of the gospel stories Jesus offered something to people. Mostly he offered healing. It is natural for the people to expect from Jesus. Because Jesus came as the Son of God. He wanted to help the poor and the needy. He came to serve, but not to be served. He provided the Passover meal to the disciples where Jesus acted as a host. Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Even he offered himself on the cross for the sins of the whole world.

There was a time when Jesus asked something from the people. It was in the context of the feeding of the five thousand. The miracle story of feeding the five thousand is found in all four gospels (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-

14). I encourage everyone to read the same story in all four gospels. Most of the stories of Jesus are found either in three gospels or in one gospel. Very seldom a story is found in all four gospels. The story of the feeding the crowd occurs in all four gospels. That means this story must have been so important to the gospel writers that all of them mentioned it. At the outset it may appear that Jesus fed the five thousand from nothing at hand.

Only in John's gospel the story is followed by a lengthy discourse on bread. The crowd will soon find out that Jesus is the bread of life. Feeding the crowd leads to discover not just the miracle itself but the miracle worker. People are invited to have faith in the miracle worker who is the Son of God. The Son of God is none other than who is going to die for the people. In that sense Jesus is a unique Son of God. Jesus did not simply come to perform miracles. He came to call people himself so that they might have eternal life which is the focus of John's gospel.

First, Jesus wanted to test the disciples. I would like to focus on John's account of the feeding story. Jesus was now the other side of the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd kept following Jesus. Earlier the crowd witnessed many miracles including healing miracles. Of course, the disciples also testified to the power of Jesus. Jesus and the disciples were invited to a wedding at Cana. That is where Jesus turned water into wine. That was the first sign or miracle that Jesus performed in John's gospel. The disciples had the opportunity to see the miraculous power of Jesus. They believed in him.

Jesus saw a large crowd coming toward him. He knew they were hungry. He also knew what he would do to satisfy their hunger. But he wouldn't disclose it to his disciples. He wanted to test them if they still had faith in the Son of God. There are times that God tests us to see if we still trust God. God knew what we were up to. But God wanted to make sure that we continue to trust God in all circumstances. It is easier to trust God when things go on our way or when things are looking good. But it is very difficult to trust God when things go upside down in our lives. That is the time God wants us to trust God more and more.

Jesus took the opportunity to test the disciples. Jesus asked Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" (Jn 6:5). Philip was honest. He was thinking in human terms. It seems he forgot to recollect what Jesus did earlier. He turned water into wine when wine ran out at the wedding. Jesus could do a

similar miracle here too. But somehow Philip showed his humanness. It teaches us that we should always remember what God has done in our lives in the past. We need to recollect all the blessings that God bestowed upon us. It is easier to forget God's mighty acts when things seem impossible. It is impossible to feed the crowd in the wilderness. Where will the disciples go to get food for a people of five thousand and more?

Philip said, "Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little" (Jn 6:7). What Philip said was true. It would take a huge sum of money to buy food from all the restaurants. Back then, one denari was a day's wage. At least the disciples should come up with two hundred denari which is wage for two hundred days. The crowd would have had that much money nor did the disciples. The disciples were not supposed to carry money at all. They themselves had to depend upon the people for their daily food.

The disciples came to a dead end. They were also in the wilderness. They were also hungry. It was too late to go and buy food anywhere. Jesus wanted the disciples to realize the impossibility. The disciples now knew that they couldn't do anything. They exhausted all the resources. In fact, they didn't have enough resources to buy food. When we realize that we could do nothing, then God comes to rescue us. God wanted us to know that we are in darkness so that we could see the light. This is what happened here. Jesus tested the disciples so that they would be able to see the act of God.

Second, Jesus multiplied loaves and fish out of something. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" (Jn 6:9). Andrew saw some kind of hope here. There was some food available. But it was very meager. Andrew knew that it was just sufficient for the boy who brought the food with him. Probably his mother sent him with some food for supper. She knew that he would be far away from home and he couldn't get food in the wilderness even if he had some money to buy.

Like Philip, Andrew failed to recognize the power of Jesus. Jesus determined again to show his power. He already asked the crowd to sit on the grass as if they were about to receive food. The boy was willing to bring what he had to Jesus. He could have refused it. He was willing to share what all he had and place it on the

hands of Jesus. what did Jesus do? Jesus didn't simply get the fives loaves and two fish and start distributing to the people. He prayed and blessed them. The text says, "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" (Jn 6:11). The miracle happened. More than five thousand people were fed. They were satisfied. Then the left over was about twelve baskets.

Two things went on here. The first thing is that the boy was willing to give away what he had. It was not sufficient to feed more than one. But he placed it on the hands of Jesus. God knows that we have something in our possession. If we expect big things from God, we need to bring something to God. It may be small and insignificant. But if we brought it, then we too can experience a miracle. Second, Jesus blessed the five loaves and two fish. It kept multiplying as Jesus was distributing it. It never ran out. It was like turning water into wine. The crowd kept receiving it from Jesus until they were all well fed.

We worship a God of abundance, not a God of scarcity. God knows that we possess something. It may not be sufficient to fulfill the needs of many people. We may hide it. We may not be willing to bring it to God. But God expects us to bring something to God. When we do that, God will give us more than we brought before God. The apostle Paul says, "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever, and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:20-21).

Jesus didn't hand out money to Philip and ask him to buy food for the five thousand. No, Jesus asked what do you have to offer? What can you do? Can you give something? Are you willing to share what you have? May be can you just give one loaf of bread? When we respond with I can do something and place it on Jesus's hands, miracles do happen and people are going to be fed literally and spiritually. God Bless.

**Pastor Samuel**

**Let's say the Benediction together:**

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all. Amen.**