

Sermon – 7-22-2018
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – Mark 6
By
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I have no doubt that there are some of you that are hoping I get done with my message quickly today, because your mouths are already watering thinking about our potluck after worship. Well, my message is not going to help you, but that has nothing to do with the length. Today, we're talking about Jesus feeding the 5000 people. So, there's going to be a lot of talk about food. But, we're not starting with Jesus' food. We're going to start with Elisha's food.

2 Kings 4:42-44

One of the things that I like to mention often here is that God is consistent. As much as we may try to look for inconsistencies in the ways that God works with his people, the Scripture shows us that God usually does a lot of the same things. And here's an example:

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Boy, that sounds really familiar. Someone brings food, it's not going to be enough, but it is clearly enough, and there's even some left over. So let's get to the story that's more familiar to us.

Mark 6:30-44

I want to read the whole story together, and then dig in to some of the details.

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The apostles are returning to Jesus from the missions that he sent them on earlier in chapter 6. They are to cast out unclean spirits and preach repentance. They return and report, but the people just keep coming. There are so many people who need healing, or advice, or repentance. You know how tired you are after traveling somewhere. You need a vacation from the vacation. So, imagine you've just gotten back from a *work trip*, and you need to jump right back into the work. The disciples have to be beat-down tired, and notice that they haven't even had a chance to eat. Jesus knows this and sees this. So he tells them, "Let's get out of here and quiet down for a while. Chill out. Recharge."

But they don't get much of a chance. Their quiet place lasts just as long as the boat ride does. We can probably assume, based on the fact that earlier in this chapter Jesus was in Nazareth, that the sea they are sailing on is the Sea of Galilee. To get from one side to the other, you would have to sail between 8 and 13 miles. The people find out that Jesus and the disciples are gone, and travel on foot along the outside of the lake, to get to where they will land. That means that the people traveling on foot traveled about 16 miles to

get there, and they did it faster than the guys in the boat.

But this makes sense, all of it, both the crossing a huge lake on a boat, and running around that lake on foot. When you're hungry, you get desperate. How many of you have heard the term "hangry?" I know it's plenty of you, and I know that plenty of you have experienced it. It's a combination of hungry and angry. It's what happens when someone is standing between you and getting the food you need. The disciples had to be getting hangry, because there were people upon people upon people demanding their time and their energy. Remember they couldn't eat? The people themselves are hungry in a different way. They're hungry for healing. They're hungry for words from God. They're hungry for salvation. And the desperate action that they take is running an entire way around a lake in order to be fed what they need.

We get hungry in that way too. We sometimes go through a famine of the word and action of God in our lives. We look around at our lives, and don't see him at work. We don't trust his promises. We don't have conversations and connections with others who can remind us of what God has done, and will do. But it can get even worse. I remember Deb telling a story one time of her experience working with people in famine zones. Some people get so hungry that they don't realize they're hungry anymore. To nurse them back

to health, you have to give them small doses of food, and when the body gets used to processing that, the hunger awakens again. I think the same thing applies to the work and Word of God. Some people are so used to "not being fed" by God, of course neglecting all the ways that he feeds them, that they don't realize they have the hunger anymore. But they are still hungry. And as Mark tells us, Jesus has compassion on them. Jesus has compassion on all of us, whether we realize our hunger or not. And he wants to feed us. But the disciples don't initially see this happening. All they end up seeing is the place that they are surrounded by. In our translation, the place is described as "quiet," "solitary," and "remote." Every one of those is the same Greek word, *eremos*. It can also be translated as "desert." There is nothing there. To the disciples' eyes, there is nothing there that is going to satisfy the hunger of this crowd, and nothing that is going to satisfy their need to be filled either. Can you imagine their reaction when Jesus says, "You give them something to eat"? Dude. Seriously. We've got nothing left. They've got nothing. We're all tapped out. We wouldn't even have enough money between us to do this if we went to the store. We've got nothing except this piddly five loaves of bread and two fish, and that isn't going to do anything. Well, that's the same thing that Elisha's servant said. And God is consistent. In the middle of a desert, where

it doesn't look like there's nearly enough to provide for the people that are there, God provides. And not only does he provide the bread and the fish necessary for everyone, including the disciples, to finally eat, he also provides the care, comfort, and rest that everyone, including the disciples, needed. Whether they knew it or not, God did not just provide for their physical needs, but their emotional and especially spiritual needs as well. And here, he uses what was there, five loaves of bread and two fish. In the creation, God does it out of nothing. Whatever you're hungry for, God can and will provide. There will probably be some grumbling along the way. There will be difficult times. There will be times where it seems God has brought you to the desert with no way of providing for you. But he already has. He has provided his Son for you, so that in his death and resurrection, you may be forgiven of your sins, and bring him into yourself. And the psalm shows us what that looks like.

Psalm 34:1-10

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We taste. We hear. We believe. We are provided for. Now let's go eat. AMEN.