Fed by Jesus

John 6:1-15 Kimby Young

John 6:35 February 4, 2024

The next miracle of Jesus as seen in the gospel of John is – feeding multitudes of people. You have all heard this story before. This miracle is the only miracle, other than the resurrection of Jesus - It is the only miracle included in all four gospels. And in Matthew and Mark this miracle of feeding is recorded on two different occasions. John gives a few more details than the other gospels including the boy who offers his lunch and the names of the disciples who interact. Andrew reveals his faithfulness by believing Jesus can do something with the lunch. And later John uses the miracle to express more of Jesus connection to God with the phrase, “I am the bread of life.” Revealing that Jesus nourishes us – literally feeds us with everything we need to live. We need bread or food to survive. Just so we need Jesus in order to truly live – both now and in eternal life. As verse 35 says anyone who comes to Jesus will never be hungry or thirsty. We will be satisfied and will be filled with the spirit of God.

Throughout the gospel of John, Jesus begins phases with the words, “I AM.” – as in verse 35 - I am the bread of life. Others include the good shepherd, the vine and branches, the light of the world. Each of these statements – known as I AM statements – is intended to link Jesus with God, to express that Jesus and God are one. I Am is the Old Testament name for God – connected with the revelation of God to Moses at the burning bush. With each statement Jesus is revealing a little bit more about the nature of God. I am the bread of life, tells us that God feeds us, nourishes us, nurtures and cares for us. God gives us everything we need to live.

It also points us forward to the last supper, where Jesus fed his disciples and promised God’s love. Jesus took bread and said – this is my body broken for you. When we share communion we remember that sacrifice of Jesus body on the cross – a sacrifice made with love and hope. We remember that in the breaking of Jesus body, sin and death were also broken and defeated. Because Jesus died for us, we don’t have to die. Because Jesus rose for us, we are able to be with God for eternity. Jesus says, I am the bread of life. Receive that gift of God’s grace and be nourished now and forever.

We share communion every month – and could share it even more often, as often as we want. We share communion in order to be nourished by Jesus, the bread of life. In this life, we need to be fed again and again. We aren’t perfect Christians or perfect humans, we must continue to grow and become all God calls us to be. We must continue to receive God’s gifts, to learn, to be nourished and filled by God’s grace.

One of the wonderful things about the feeding miracle story is that there seems to be absolutely no limit to the gifts Jesus offers. The bread never runs out. Jesus has more and more to offer us every time we come. Every time we turn to Jesus we are fed and filled. God always has more for us – grace in abundance, grace overflowing.

Sometimes we act like the gifts of God are limited. We have to be careful how we share ministry because resources are limited, time is limited, energy is scarce. Some people are even careful about who they share God’s love with, as if there is only bread enough for the deserving and the worthy – whatever that is. This miracle story reminds us, with Jesus, because of Jesus – there is always enough. There is more than enough to go around, to share. Jesus will provide for our needs as we trust in God. Jesus will take any gifts we offer – even 5 little loaves and 2 tiny fish. Jesus will take whatever we offer and multiply it into the thousands. There is bounty in God’s grace, abundance in God’s provision. God uses what we offer – whatever we offer, even if we don’t think it is enough. God knows it is more than enough when offered with generosity and joy. Share freely and fully, for Jesus will always offer more and more.

Look at the characters in the story. The crowd looking for entertainment and adventure. Philip feeling overwhelmed by the task of feeding so many. A boy offering his lunch to help others. Andrew taking that gift and passing it forward to Jesus – maybe hoping, maybe not sure what to believe. We are among these characters coming to Jesus, asking for help, asking for bread. Hungry for fulfillment. Hoping for life. Not really expecting Jesus to transform and to save. Maybe what we ask is too much. Maybe we shouldn’t be demanding. Maybe we should just get by and keep going the way we’ve been going.

I think there is a “twist” in these miracle stories. I think there is a subtle underlying message that God likes it when we try the impossible. When we take risks in Jesus’ name. When we believe the unbelievable. God rewards us, God blesses us, God provides for us, God works through us – when we try, when we make the effort, even in the face of what seems impossible. Here we have 5 loaves of bread. Let’s feed 5000 people. Sure. Why not? I think God likes it when we have courage to move forward, when we have faith to try something new, even when it doesn’t seem to make sense. That happens in a lot of Bible stories – not just this one. The friends who cut a hole in the roof to get their friend to Jesus. The woman who presses thru the crowd just to touch the edge of Jesus robe and be healed. Even Jesus own mother at the wedding in Cana who says – Jesus will get more wine for you. All of these are rewarded for faithfulness in the face of impossible odds. I think God likes that. I think God blesses that. I think God empowers that. Trying. Making the effort. Here are 5 loaves – let’s feed all of Gardner, let’s reach all of Kansas, let’s dream. God blesses that effort. God rewards us when we try, when we believe.

God can be trusted. God’s promises are true. This miracle story reminds us of all the times God has fed God’s people in the past. It points forward with hope to all the ways God will feed us in the future. The little bit of bread we will share in a moment during communion reminds us - we ate today, we will eat tomorrow. God gives us each day our daily bread. Everything we need. Believe it. And receive the gifts of God for all the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Amen.

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After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 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?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” 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.” 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.

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Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.