

Sermon- Our Saviors Lutheran Church- 7/29/2018

A Child Shows the Way

Grace and peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. It was quite a few years ago. I was at a dinner for Our Saviors Lutheran in Appleton. It might have been the occasion for a celebration of my ordination, or for my years of service at the church, or simply just because. That church, as well as this church, likes to gather to eat. A woman who I didn't know came to me and introduced herself. Her name was Ruth. She explained that she had a few friends that attended the church and they spoke highly about what was happening and the fact that it was really growing. I remember saying to her that she should come some Sunday and see for herself. She laughed and said that she was sure she wouldn't fit in. This comment, of course, surprised me. I told her that I was sure she would fit in. Our Saviors was a real welcoming place. She then said that she was a single mom who had never been married. I told her that such a fact had nothing to do with the price of eggs. All people were welcome. She kind of smiled and drifted off. I'm going to tell you the end of the story and what it has to do with this Gospel lesson, but first let's look at the Gospel.

The reputation of Jesus has been growing. If they had Facebook or twitter or Snapchat back in his day there would have been a gazillion hits. Jesus comes to a rather quiet, remote location to take a break, a rest so to speak. To get away for a while. Good food for thought for us. Even Jesus needs a break, to pause. How's that going for us? Probably could be another sermon.

Well, it didn't go as planned for Jesus. Crowds descended upon Jesus with a myriad of needs. Some physical, others emotional and spiritual. In short, they came because they needed his help. So, he begins to preach, and heal, and reach out to the crowds. The problem now is that it is almost dinner time. Jesus asks his disciples for help with this very real problem. What to do about dinner? Nearest town was miles away. Then there was the problem of cash! Who was going to pay for it? Philip even says that it would take even more than 200 silver coins or feed all these people. It would exceed the limit on his American Express Card. Another disciple apparently overhears the conversation between Philip and Jesus, and comes forward with a rather bizarre solution to the dilemma. He says that he found a kid who has some sardines and buns but what good is that for so many people? Wonder how he found the kid. Did he see his knapsack and demanded to

know what was in it? Or did the child overhear the predicament and come forward with his offer.

Friend of mine serving a congregation near Atlanta related the time his church was engaged in a major capital campaign. He had gone to one of the member's home and delivered his pitch for a major gift. One of the member's young boy was present. After a few minutes the boy jumps up, and runs to his bedroom. About 5 minutes later he comes into the dining room where they were meeting, dumps all his money from his piggy bank on the table and says, "There's \$11.35 there, if you need more, come and see me."

So we go back to the text about the kid in the story. You know it's kind of funny. Here we had all these people, text says it numbered in the thousands, all these people that had packed backpacks and coolers for this day trip. Sandwiches and brats. But, none had offered to share, only the young kid. He gave all he had. He didn't hold back. Here, take this, he said. Jesus probably smiled and said, someone finally gets it. And Jesus uses the example of the kid to multiply the gift. It might also mean that others around the kid got the message as well.

Maybe there are two miracles. The first being Jesus making the gift of the kid enough to feed 5,000. The second possible miracle has to do with the rest of the crowd. Could it be that Jesus brought this little boy forward, quieted the crowd and said, "You see this small child here? He is the example of those who are part of my kingdom. When he heard me say that we needed to provide food for all of you, he came forward and offered his lunch, all he had." Could it be that there was a rustling in the crowd. Could it be that one by one people began reaching into their backpacks and bringing out the food that they had been hoarding for themselves, and began to share. One man had two loaves of bread and gave one to his neighbor. A mom had sandwiches for her children. She cut them in half and fed another family. One guy had 3 bottles of wine and he opened up all 3 and poured freely for whoever wanted some.

That's the lesson that we need to take out of this Gospel. When we offer the gift Jesus will multiply it.

- When we offer gifts of our financial resources, Jesus will multiply it- happened in our Faith in Action Campaign.
- When we offer forgiveness for others, that gift will be multiplied- they will forgive others.
- When we offer the gift of caring for others, that gift will be multiplied- they in turn will be come caring individuals.

- When we offer the gift of accepting others and not judging- that gift will be multiplied- they will become accepting individuals.

Remember I started this homily about Ruth, the single mom who had never been married. She came to church the following Sunday. Never found out if she felt welcome because she didn't stick around after church. But she came again to church and again for a long time. She was elected later to the church council and in time became the Treasurer of the church. A position she held for quite a number of years. The people of Our Saviors had offered her acceptance and love and that gift had been multiplied. Ruth brought in tons of people to our church who felt the same love and acceptance.

The little boy in the Gospel gave all he had.
Be like the little child and watch your gift multiply.
Amen. Let it be so.