

9 Pentecost Yr A, 6/08/2017  
Matt 14:13-21  
Rev. Garth Wehrfritz-Hanson

“Enough is enough”

There is a story about a young pastor preaching on today’s gospel for his first sermon. He was very nervous. His nervousness showed as he tried to expound on this text: “The Master fed the multitude” he said, his voice quivering, “with 5,000 loaves and 2,000 fish.” An old fellow sitting in the front row chuckled sarcastically and said, “Why I could do that.” The new pastor was too flustered to correct himself so he went on to something else.

The next Sunday the young pastor tried again. “Last Sunday I meant to say that the Master fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two tiny fish.” Thinking he now had things in hand, he turned to the old man and asked, “Could you do that?” The old fellow grinned and said, “I could if you’d let me use what we had left over last week.”<sup>1</sup>

In today’s gospel, Jesus challenges his disciples of old and us to learn the difference between not enough and enough. Jesus helps us to see that not enough can become enough. The story begins when Jesus hears the bad news that John the Baptist was dead. His response to this is that he had enough of people for a while and wanted to be alone.

We’re told that Jesus withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. This is the human side of Jesus here. He, like many of us, need a quiet time a place to be alone sometimes. He may have been saddened to learn of the bad news of John’s death; so he wanted and needed time to be alone to grieve the loss of John’s death. Sometimes when we get bad news of a person’s death whom we’ve known and loved for some time; we too may want and need time alone to grieve our loss.

However, Jesus’ downtime alone was short lived—Matthew tells us

that the crowds followed him and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. Jesus, even though he might still have been sad over the death of John, has the heart to see the needs of others. He then is full of compassion for the sick ones in the crowds; he placed their needs over and above his own needs; he cures those sick folks in the crowds.

His compassion doesn't stop there though. He continues to treat these large crowds with compassion by feeding them, 5,000 men besides women and children. WOW! That's a lot of people to feed! By feeding those hungry crowds, Jesus shows compassion on them.

The story is an interesting one in that the disciples, perhaps in their need to have some quiet, downtime, and perhaps they were exhausted after a long day; they say to Jesus: "send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." The disciples may have been speaking out of genuine concern for Jesus himself too, realizing that he too would have been tired like them. So out of concern for Jesus' health they suggest sending the crowds away. They might have been thinking: "Enough is enough already! Now it's time for some peace and quiet."

What does Jesus do? Well, he surprised them, even shocked them into a way different understanding of what enough means! He tells them, "They need not go away; *you* give them something to eat." I can hear the disciples responding to Jesus by saying: "What?! Us?! Are you crazy?! How can we do that!? I think a lot of us, if we had been there, would be like the disciples and think or say similar things.

In any case, when they recovered from Jesus' surprising and shocking suggestion, the disciples replied, probably in a skeptical, protesting kind of way: "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." In other words, this is only a drop in the bucket; this is certainly not enough food to feed such large crowds! We say, with countless others down through the ages: "Jesus, five loaves and two fish are not enough!"

Jesus took those five loaves and two fish, blessed and broke them, and then gave them to the disciples telling them to give them to the crowds. Lo and behold, those skeptical, protesting, exhausted disciples discovered that enough *was enough!* As they distributed the food to those crowds, everyone ate and then the disciples gathered up enough leftover food to fill twelve baskets! WOW! Enough *was enough!* Jesus, in that compassionate act of feeding 5,000 men besides women and children expanded the disciples' understanding of enough.

I like this story because it involves the disciples in a profound way. They move from being sceptics and protesters to participants in Jesus' feeding miracle and come to believe that, with Jesus, what seems not enough is transformed into enough. There are times in our lives when we say: "Lord, this is not enough!" However, we also realize that when we call on Jesus for help; and when other people participate in helping out; oftentimes not enough is transformed into enough. So it is that Jesus puts our faith into practice by working with him and others to accomplish enough.

As we are about to participate in the Lord's Supper today, may we realize and believe that enough is enough. There is enough love and enough forgiveness to go around for you and me—for everyone here as we celebrate this Holy Meal. As we partake of this Holy Meal, may we then go out and share the love and forgiveness of Jesus with others—since there is enough for others to go round too.

The Lord's Supper is also a reminder to us of "the foretaste of the feast to come;" that day when all God's people will be gathered round the heavenly banquet table and celebrate in the full presence of Jesus; when enough will be way more than enough! Love and joy without end. Amen!

1 *Emphasis: A Preaching Journal for the Parish Pastor*, Vol. 23, No. 2, July-August 1993 (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Co., Inc.), p. 45.

