

YOU give them something to eat.

Today's Gospel story is just one of the best. The miracle of the 2 fish and 5 loaves. The feeding of the multitudes. The feeding of the 5,000 (plus women and children). It's a great story!

All four Gospels contain this story. So not only do WE love it...the Gospel writers must have thought it to be so important in Jesus' ministry and teachings that they all included it.

The 3 synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all have Jesus saying the exact same words (as translated into our New Revised Standard Version).

YOU give them something to eat.

The disciples, Jesus' friends and followers, come to Jesus with a very real problem. There are over 5,000 people here. It's getting late. They are getting hungry. They'd better send them on their way so they can get something to eat. And Jesus replies,

YOU give them something to eat.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is not quite so direct. Jesus hints to a couple of his disciples that they should figure out a plan to feed the people. A child with fish and bread shows up. The rest of the story is the same.

But once again, Jesus tells his friends, "YOU give them something to eat."

This story is deep. There's so much to think about...to concentrate on. The huge crowd. The meager food available. The miracle. And HOW did Jesus do what he did?

The problem with this story is that I think we might get confused what this miracle story is actually about it.

Jesus says, "YOU give them something to eat."

I bet the disciples were flabbergasted. What are you talking about, Jesus? How can we feed so many people? We've got no money and so very little food.

“**YOU** give them something to eat.”

Don't send them away.

Don't look for a way out.

Don't hope for someone else to do it.

Don't wait for tomorrow.

“**YOU** give them something to eat.”

Far too often we act and sound like the disciples do in today's Gospel.

We don't have enough bread.

And that might mean we don't have enough time, or money;

energy, willingness, or ability;

faith, love, or compassion.

We're skeptical.

We're pessimistic.

We're preoccupied, distracted, lazy, uninspired, selfish, insecure, unconvinced – just like those disciples were that day.

Our “reasons”...our excuses...are infinite.

But God has no time for our lame excuses. Let's imagine that the miracle of today's Gospel isn't about bread and fish – a little food for a lot of people.

In his commentary on this scripture, Rev. Mark Havel of Grace Lutheran Church in Indiana suggests that Jesus' direction of “You give them something to eat,” is the main point of this miracle.

In that sentence, Jesus reveals to us just what a high opinion God has of us. God is not only concentrating on the lost and lonely; the sick and needy people on that hillside that day for whom he shows so much compassion...

God is concentrating on us. Jesus reveals that God has faith in US....those who believe in and who want to follow God faithfully.

Jesus is saying, “I believe in you. You’ve got this.”

There is no need to wait for someone else to do it.

Don’t pretend you don’t have the time or the skills or the resources to do God’s work in the world.

Don’t pretend you’re not qualified or capable.

Don’t put it off for another day or time or moment when it might be more convenient for you.

And child, certainly don’t even wait for someone to do it in your place.

You...WE...are beloved children of God. Jesus instructs us over and over and over to take care of one another. In our baptismal covenant, we promise that we will do that just that.

God believes that we can do it. Jesus tells us to do it. As followers of Jesus Christ our Savior, we are compelled to do it.

Back in the summer of 2014, the United States was faced with a huge number of unaccompanied minors from Central and South America coming to our border with Mexico seeking asylum, seeking refuge and safety, trying to enter the United States to find a better life than the one they had.

I was attending and training at St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church down the north valley at the time. Before one weekday Eucharist, two women came to me with a question. They wanted to know where in the Bible Jesus spoke about welcoming the stranger.

Whew. I scripture I could actually pinpoint. The three of us then read that passage from Matthew, chapter 25.

“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Immediately, one of the women said, “But that’s so hard....especially with these children at the border. What are we supposed to do?”

In a moment of clarity, the Holy Spirit spoke for me. These words came out of my mouth. “That’s the hard work of being Christian. Jesus tells us WHAT to do. Jesus doesn’t always tell us HOW to do it.

Just because we are not given explicit instructions on how to do God’s will here on earth does not excuse us from getting it done.

YOU give them something eat. You figure it out and get it done.

And that’s the beauty of being a part of a Christian community like St. Mark’s. Not a single one of us has to do it alone.

Instead of an individual receiving the message “You” (singular) give them something to eat. We all hear “You” (Plural) give them something to eat.

And just as the disciples weren’t completely left to their own devices with 5,000 people on the hillside that day, God is always with us as we do God’s work here on earth.

WE will give them something to eat.
WE will give them something to drink.
WE will welcome the stranger.
WE will clothe the naked
WE will take care of the sick.
WE will visit those in prison.

Last Sunday, during coffee hour we heard about several outreach ministries here at St. Mark’s that are working to help those who need our help. Those ministries are up and running. Anyone of us can join and help with immigration and migration issues, food insecurity for students and teachers at UNM, helping supply food for food banks.....providing assistance, support, and food for our unhoused neighbors.

The list of needs is endless.

And that’s where we begin to doubt ourselves. We get overwhelmed and we throw up our hands and say “we can’t possibly feed all these people.”

But as I said earlier, God has a very opinion of us. God believes that we are up to task of taking care of all the beloved children of God here on earth.

Jesus said, “YOU give them something to eat.” Jesus knows we are human and frail....whiney....afraid of looking bad....afraid we won’t get a perfect score on the test. Jesus knows of our paralyzing fear of failure and our deep desire to complain about something rather than help to change it. God know how much we like to rest.

But as a very wise mentor told me many years ago, “the only way to fail is to not try.”

So we must get over ourselves and get something done.

We WILL give them something to eat.