

Enough Proper 12, Year B – John 6:1-21

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, July 26, 2015

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set in on fire with love for thee. Amen.

Every time I hear this morning's Gospel story of miraculous abundance, I am taken back to a Sunday afternoon when when I was nine or ten years old. I've told you before that back then, the Martindale family "summered" in west-central Ohio, where Dad served as a supply preacher, going from church to church, filling in for pastors during their vacations. The day I remembered *again*, as I read *again* the story of hungry people being fed, was in the little town of Philipsburg, about half an hour north of Dayton. If I was really pushed, I might be able to remember what the sermon was about that day. After all, during these church hopping rotations, I got hear the same two sermons repeated for the whole summer. But the thing that always calls me back to the little fellowship hall in Philipsburg, was the layout at the after-the-preaching pot-luck dinner.

There must have been ten or twelve tables, piled high with homemade things, from every food group under the sun. There were pots of roast beef swimming in gravy, and hams glazed and topped with pineapple slices and cherries, and of course, my favorite to this day, pile after pile of crispy crusted, juicy fried chicken. There were mounds of mashed potatoes, and deviled eggs, and that green bean casserole with the crunchy onions on the top. Though they weren't at the top of my list as a red-blooded ten-year-old boy, there was seven layer salad, five bean salad, and the mid-west-obligatory Jell-O molds: the red one with fruit cocktail floating in it, the orange one with the little marshmallows, and the green one with the shredded carrots. And then, there was the crowing glory – the dessert tables. Pies and cakes and cobblers and cookies cobblers, as far as my eyes could see.

And all of it was there for the taking, as much as I wanted. Except *we* waited. As *usual*, Dad said the Grace and then was invited to go first in the line. As *usual*, I looked at him with pleading eyes, I crossed the fingers on both hands, I even uttered a little prayer that just this *one time*, he would accept that invitation, and we would get first crack at all the goodies. But as *usual*, he declined to go first, and the hoard of *other* kids in the congregations attacked the plates of chicken, and bowls of veggies, and mounds of confection, while I stood there and watched.

With Mom doing her best to keep the younger ones corralled, I stood there next to my Daddy as he chatted away with this perfumed matron, or that glad-handing deacon, trying my hardest in my gold double-breasted blazer, to be the patient young man I was supposed to be, when inside, I knew, although it had never happened, not even once, inside I remember being completely *certain*, that when I finally got to those tables, *everything* thing would be gone. I was absolutely sure that *this* time the food would end before the line did. I stood there convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt, that this afternoon in Philipsburg, Ohio, there was not going to be enough... for *me*.

I just can't help it. Whenever I hear this text, I can just feel the worry in the heart of the little boy sitting with number four thousand, nine hundred, ninety-nine on that grassy hillside. As he saw the baskets being passed, as he saw *thousands* of people beginning to eat, as he oh-so-impatiently waited his turn, I can hear him saying, at least to himself, "Is there enough... for me?" Maybe his family had come that day to hear the teachings of the one the people were beginning to call a prophet. Maybe they had come that day in hopes of getting close enough to have some disease cured, or some infirmity made whole. Maybe today was not the first day that the boy had been hungry, maybe not the first day that he had gone without, maybe not the first day that the boy had asked, "Is there enough?"

The story of the feeding of the five thousand is not important, *just* because it is a record of one of Jesus's miraculous signs and wonders. The story is not one of the few stories of Jesus's ministry that is found in all four of the Gospels, *just* because it explains his popularity among the people of first century Palestine. The story does not call to us today just as forcefully as it called to the first Christians, *just* because it bolsters Jesus's claim to be the Messiah.

The reason that this story is so important, is that that little boy who waited his turn, that little boy *way* back on the farthest hill, that little boy with nothing in his belly, and questions in his heart, that little boy was *fed* that day, when Jesus blessed the bread and broke it and set it before them. We spend so much of our time asking the same question for a much different reason. We live meager, *scanty* lives, filled with worry and doubt. *Or* we spend our days storing and amassing and hoarding what ever we can lay our hands on. *Or* we hustle about in a frantic attempt to try to reach that next goal, in a frenzied attempt to get just a little bit more. Whatever form it takes, we spend our lives asking, "Is there enough for me?" And we miss the blessing that are ours for the taking.

The reason that the story of the feeding of the five thousand is so important, is that not only was there enough for that last little boy that day, there was plenty for *everyone*. Our lesson tells us that there was so much food passed around, that "*all* ate and were filled." I suspect that there is no one here this morning who will literally leave here physically hungry. But in the *rest* of our lives, it may be another thing entirely. In our scurrying and our worrying, we often end up missing out on the things that really fill our needs. We hunger for cakes and cobblers and cookies, while we starve for want of bread. We thirst for soda and sweet tea and wine, while we perish for lack of water. We want to be spoon fed pabulum and num-nums, while we wither for lack of solid meat.

The reason that the story of the feeding of the five thousand is so important, is that not only was there enough to feed everyone that day, when all was said and done, they filled twelve *baskets* with the left-overs. This story isn't just about providence. This story isn't just about our God taking care of our basic needs. This is a story about the absolute *abundance* of God's grace. This is a story about the absolute *overflowing* of his goodness. This is a story about the absolute enormity of God's love for us. Look around you now and as you go through the rest of your day. Look around you as you work and as you play. Take the time to look around you as you live your busy life. We are *surrounded* by the goodness of God. We are *blessed* beyond our wildest imaginings. We have not only enough to *fill* us, but *baskets*-full beside.

If we are to live authentic Christian lives, if we are to live into the dream that God has for us and for all creation, if we are to live lives filled with the understanding that we are blessed with riches beyond compare, that we have been given cups that are running over, that we are already heirs of the very Kingdom of Heaven, we need to give up the shacky worry of the ten-year-old, waiting at end of pot-luck line, asking, "Is there enough for me?" And perhaps instead, we can model our lives on the exclamation of sister Zimmermann at the end of that Sunday's pot-luck dinner at Philipsburg United Missionary Church: "My lands," she said, as she wrapped a perfumed arm around a thoroughly stuffed ten-year-old, who had to unbutton his double-breasted coat to make room for one more cookie, "What are we going to *do* with all these leftovers?"