

Sermon Words August 2, 2020

Text: Matthew 14:13-21

Title: God Invites Us to Be Co-Creators of Miracles

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1. We are what we eat. Generally speaking, if we eat healthy, we become healthy. If we over eat, we get sick. But if we don't eat at all, we go hungry, malnourished, or even starve to death.
2. In the Old Testament, we have a story of Hebrew people who were mighty hungry in the middle of the desert. They complained to their leader, Moses, saying, "At least we had enough to eat in Egypt. There is nothing to eat in the desert. Why don't we go back to Egypt? Are you going to let us all starve to death in the middle of the desert?" Instead of letting them starve to death, God provided them with manna and quails as well as water. God took care of their problems on His own.
3. In today's New Testament reading we have a slightly different story. One day a great multitude of people came to listen to Jesus. At dinner time they were hungry. Jesus's disciples reported to Jesus and said, "It's dinner time. People are hungry. Please do something about this situation."
4. Jesus did not say, "Let's pray and we will have a miracle." Instead, Jesus said, "You give them something to eat." His disciples said, "There is no way to feed all these people." Jesus said to them, "What do you have? Use what you have to help people in need." His disciples said, "A little boy brought a lunch box with five loaves of bread and two fish."
5. Jesus blessed the five loaves of bread and two fish and said, "Now share the bread and the fish with hungry people." When they obeyed Jesus's words, a great miracle happened. Everyone had enough to eat and there were twelve baskets full of leftovers. It was a happy ending story.
6. Some people don't like this miracle story because they say that it's a fake story. They say that feeding five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fish is an impossible story. But I believe that this story has a meaningful message for us.
7. The message of this story is that God works wonders for suffering people when we collaborate with God. God wants us to be partners in doing good for people in need.

8. When his disciples said to Jesus, "Please help us out. We need food to feed these hungry people," Jesus did not say, "I am God. I can take care of this. Just sit back, relax, and watch what I can do for you." Instead, Jesus said, "You give them something to eat."

9. Jesus does not solve all problems for us. Jesus invites us to be partners to work wonders for people in need. Jesus wants us to do our part before we expect help from him. Jesus treats us like grownups, not immature, helpless, and powerless babies.

10. When Cindy's sons were little, Cindy took care of them and provided for them. But when they became teenagers, Cindy encouraged them to do their part to make things better. When Clayton bought his first car. It was not a fancy car. It was a cheap used car.

11. Cindy said to Clayton that she would pay a half of the car's cost but he had to work at Piggly Wiggly to make money to pay for his portion of the car's ownership. It worked well. If Cindy had paid it all for him, he would have missed the opportunity to grow mature and self-reliant.

12. When we have problems in the world, we may want to pray to God, "God, we have Covid-19 problems. We have racism problems. We have the big gap between the haves and the have nots. We have gun violence. Please fix these problems for us."

13. God may say to us, "I would like to. But I want your help to fix these problems. I want to invite you to be my partners to fix world problems. I created you to be my co-creators of a wonderful world. Will you share what you have to help people in need?" Will you give up some of your privileges to help the underprivileged brothers and sisters in your society?" Will you work for social justice so that the laws will be fair to the poor as well as to the rich?

14. God does not work miracles alone. God wants us to be a part of God's miracles for the world. If we let God use what we have for God's good purposes, we will be God's partners of God's great miracles for the suffering world.

15. As St. Augustine said, "Without God, we cannot. But without us, God will not." Wonderful miracles happen when we let God use us as the instruments of God's grace and mercy for suffering people in the world.

16. Jesus did not feed five thousand hungry people with his prayer alone. Jesus invited his followers to be partners of God's great miracle of feeding five thousand hungry men.

17. When we share what we have with less fortunate people, when we give up our privileges to benefit less privileged people in our society, when we overcome our selfishness and greed and become more compassionate and merciful to the poor and the oppressed of our society, God's miracles are not confined to the Bible. It happens over and over again.

18. Recently I saw a news video clip. An innocent Black young man was walking in an affluent residential area. A White woman was accosting him and yelled at him, "Get out of our neighborhood. You don't belong here. Get out of here."

19. The Black man kept walking without fighting back. A young White woman intervened and said to the woman, "Let him walk. He didn't do anything wrong. Let him walk."

20. In a small way, the young woman was a voice of God, speaking the words of truth to the racist woman and speaking the words of care and support to the innocent Black pedestrian.

21. The meaning and the purpose of our life on earth is to express God's justice and love through our words and actions. Let us surrender ourselves to the will of God so that God may use us as God's partners to work wonderful miracles for people in pain and suffering. Amen

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