

Ebenezer Lutheran Church
A13proper08
Matthew 14:13-21 Title: They Need Not Go Away...
August 3, 2008
Sola Gloria Dei

We've all had the experience,
And it's a favorite gripe to share:
You've come home from a full day,
You sit down at the table for supper,
You say table grace to thank God for the food,
Are ready to take the first bite, and the phone rings.
Without thinking to check caller ID you pick it up,
There's a three second lag,
And then suddenly you hear a buzz of people talking in the background as a louder voice
says,
Hello, is this Mr. Uh, Prinjel? How are you doing this evening, sir?
And of course, it somehow feels worse when you're really pre-occupied with something
serious that has happened at work, or at home,
A death, a hospitalization, or other serious problem that is on your mind.
That last thing you want to do is hear a phone call from someone that is asking for
something,
Be it the your credit card company,
Or if we are honest about it, even the Fraternal Order of Police or The Special Olympics.

Or imagine it's a knock at the front door instead.
You and some close friends over for dinner, a little break in the day to day routine,
A bit of time set aside for some quality conversation and some re-creation,
That nice feeling of looking at the table all set up and the faces of trusted friends sitting
down at it, holding hands for grace,
Ready to pass the mashed potatoes and...[knock, knock, knock]
Or how about this --
Just a need to get away, for whatever the reason,

And you find just the right get-away spot,
A deserted place away from the crowds,
So you settle in, have chance to just chill out,
And with a nice cold beverage, sit out on the rocker,
All ready to heave a contented sigh and...
There's a sound of some cars coming up the isolated gravel driveway...
That's what Jesus heard when he had a need to get away;
John the Baptist had been beheaded,
A violent death of his own kin,
The voice crying in the wilderness who had announced Jesus' coming,
His ministry, his presence as the Son of God,
It had to have been a blow to Jesus,
Something to get away from, to think about, to mourn, to consider *what next?*
But the crowds found him,
As a matter of fact they anticipated where he was going to get away and they *met* him
there,
Even before he got off the boat.
And Jesus -- *look, I'll be back on Monday, leave a message with the office...*
No, of course not, he had compassion on them, and cured their sick, all day long,
Thanks be to God;
And then his friends, his disciples did what we would consider a **good** thing --
They looked out for their Teacher, their friend.
It had been a long day,
There may have even been a little bit of that feeling among the disciples that "it's our
turn now,"
WE get to have our friend, our teacher, FOR OUR OWN, at least for a little bit,
Or even, we get to have some down time together, Jesus and us,
This is our time for refreshment, this is OUR time...

We can feel that way at home, or on vacation,
And we can feel it at Ebenezer, too, can't we?

Sunday morning,
Or back to Church for some other event --
A meeting, bible class, reception, Patrons event...
The disciples told Jesus,
We've been at this all day,
We need to take care of ourselves,
These people need to get themselves home in time for supper,
Let's thank them for coming,
And let them go to provide for themselves.
But Jesus said, **They need not go away. You feed them.**

The story of Jesus today reminds us of something we may have forgotten in our
compartmentalized, scheduled life,
That the mission of the Church never stops.
Jesus says, **They need not go away. You feed them.**
Jesus challenged the disciples to really think how that could happen.
An impossible situation,
A group of people bigger than one small group of disciples could possibly feed,
And Jesus says,
Give me your vision of how my love should be shared with these people.

It's the same situation we face today.
We come to Ebenezer to be refreshed, to hear the word, to share in the supper of life and
forgiveness,
And to enjoy fellowship with one another, seeing friends new and old,
Lemonade under the tree, or coffee in the Reception room,
It's a bit of a getaway perhaps from the surrounding world with all its problems and
challenges, and maybe our own problems and challenges,
I've heard some of you describe *getting filled up*, *getting the batteries charged* or other
such ways to talk of being spiritually fed when they come for worship, or for bible study,
or a Patrons event,

And yet we continue to be met by a community that is at least 50% unchurched,
That's right, even here in the bible belt,
Surrounded by a crowd containing a large portion of young adults, young families who
are spiritually hungry, but have not found nourishing spiritual food.
We also know the crowds around us at Ebenezer contain
The poor, the hungry, the homeless, and others who Jesus would say are sheep without a
shepherd.
The crowds contain all kinds of different people, white, black, Hispanic, Asian, married,
divorced, single, gay, young, old, people of means, people with nothing, the educated,
and the not so, Carolina born, and transplants from all over.
And to his disciples, Jesus says, **They need not go away. You feed them.**

How can we possibly do that with such a large, diverse crowd?
We have our own congregation to think about,
Let alone thinking about our community.
And yet that's what Jesus is asking us to do, today.

The disciples answered, *but we've only got five loaves and two fish!*
To which Jesus says, bring it to me.
12 people, 12 disciples with five loaves and two fish between them,
And 5000 were fed.
What was unthinkable, happened.
It's important for you and me to see what made the unthinkable possible.
I'm not sure that the way we normally talk about this story,
As the Miracle of the Feeding of the 5000 does us any good,
Because it allows us to pass up an important turning point.
What makes possible the Feeding of the 5000?
Jesus? Yes,
But Jesus taking what the disciples offer, five loaves and two fish,
What they had at the time,
And making it enough.

So, what is your five loaves and two fish?

What is our five loaves and two fish pooled together and offered to Jesus?

The disciples were incredulous, but they offered their five loaves and two fish nonetheless,

They offered what they had at the time, and it was enough.

50% of the Midlands is unchurched and living in your neighborhood.

At the last official count, there were over 4,000 homeless in the Midlands,

And the majority live in Richland and Lexington Counties.

Marion Street highrise, Hannah House women's ministry, are a few steps from our doorstep, and a new Homelessness Service Center is set to be built on the Salvation Army property.

Community CME Church and Ebenezer are in the process of opening up a Teen After School Center, and the Richland County juvenile justice liaison tells us there are over 450 at risk teens within a couple of miles of both congregations...

It's too much, isn't it?

And yet here they are, they may be near your car when you leave this service.

Suggest what you will to Jesus,

But he's going to say,

They need not go away. You feed them.

What is your five loaves and two fish, and will you offer them?

Summer is a great time for refreshment and getting ready.

Pray for the Spirit's help to guide you to offer your five loaves and two fish.

And then offer it.

It's an amazing thing, that according to the gospel, Jesus says,

Offer it to me, and it'll be enough.

Amen.