

July 28th Sermon – Elder Mark Brodaczynski

This reading in my mind is the epitome of Jesus showing his inner Presbyterian. Any event I've been to where Presbyterians are gathered the host(s) have worried "will there be enough food" actually this is not just a Presbyterian thing but it's what I think sounded good at this point.

Five thousand plus gathered around Jesus this after He thought he was just with his disciples. Thinking you're at a small intimate gathering with your closest, hundreds then thousands show up. Planning for a few people then hordes show up. Makes me think of an episode of the Drew Carey show from years ago where the group of friends was planning a small celebration to say goodbye to their business of Buzz beer.

Planning on just a small group, but then a flyer was distributed to all of Cleveland in a "prank" by Drew's nemesis.

Suddenly the night of the party hundreds and then thousands of people showed up at his house. Now overwhelmed by the crowd Drew and his friends fortunately had a garage full of "product" beer which nearly ran out. While it started as a planned celebration of the closing of the business it introduced the product to an entirely new audience. The next

morning while cleaning up calls came into his phone wanting to know where to get the beer he served last night. It renewed interest in the beer he & his friends brewed in his garage.

In the same way by feeding and teaching the thousands gathered it renewed an interest in His teaching... We'll get back to that in a moment...

The other image I got when I picked this reading for this morning was the Sesame Street episode where Bert & Ernie were fishing. Bert struggling mightily fishing in the traditional way with rod & reel. Ernie meanwhile decides to try the "calling the fish" method. Here fishy fishy fishy and the fish jump into the boat. After a few fish jump in Bert tries, unsuccessfully at first because he's not calling loudly enough. I imagine it was a test of faith for Bert to "call" the fish to the boat. After a few tries Ernie finally convinces him to be loud enough, and a fish jumps into the boat and looks at Bert and says "you called me".

Imagine this as a Jesus moment. Are we the fishy fishy fishy that Jesus is calling? Is this a test of our faith? Or is this just a silly moment from a children's entertainment program.

Okay, back to the reading, the disciples and I'm guessing the many who gathered had doubts about the five barley loaves and two fish feeding the entire crowd, but it is through faith in Jesus that the entire crowd ate their fill and not only that there was plenty of food to spare.

Not only did the thousands get plenty to eat they collected enough fragments and scraps left to fill twelve baskets.

This not only shows Jesus as a prophet in the world but was one of the many miracles Jesus performed. It also showed Jesus in an interesting light. One of His comments "Where can we buy bread for these people to eat" shows Jesus' humble side, his unwavering desire not to display his abilities as the Messiah. He knew that He could easily take the meager food presented him and feed the masses, yet Jesus made a point of wanting to "buy the food". Jesus may have been being coy, may have wanted to just fit in, maybe didn't want to attract an even larger crowd.

Maybe Jesus was showing he didn't desire to be anything more than a teacher in His Father's house. Jesus was truly humble. One of his many great traits. Yet when Jesus performed this miracle and fed the thousands and showed His abilities to heal the sick drawing large crowds his humble nature showed. Jesus was trying to get away, I think many of us want to just get away at times. I know I do, and I think many of us have thought about it. Jesus could and wanted to withdraw and go up to the mountain. Yes for most of us just going up a mountain and escaping would have been a way to seek refuge from the crowds of people.

Nowadays it might be much harder. Especially with cell phones and credit cards and flock cameras tracking our every move.

Disappearing would be so much harder today, having to use only cash, maybe travelling under an assumed name maybe disguises and who knows what else it would take to just get away.

Having faith though is one of the most important things in our lives, if that means having faith that there will be enough to eat, enough people to work and volunteer at an event, we here at GAPC have proven that.

Faith is deeper than that. Faith is believing in ourselves, our friends and families, our leaders around us but most importantly our faith in God.

Our faith in Jesus. I think for some of us that faith is the hardest, especially when we wonder why bad things happen to good people, why we feel the way we do why things aren't moving as fast as we hope they will. Faith in what is unseen is the hardest kind of faith to have. If we can see or hold a goal it seems easier to achieve. When we can work on something either to build buy or fix it and see and hold progress in front of us we can believe but so much tests our faith.

The faith in having the food was not with the disciples right away but Jesus knew it would be there. In the same way when Jesus was walking on the lake on the way to Capernaum His disciples had doubts and fears with the storm and the rough waters of the lake. Many of us face tough times and rough waters in our lives. It is often darkest times when our faith is tested the hardest. Like night turns into day it truly can be darkest just before the dawn.

It is through our faith through our love of God and Jesus that we know

the waters can be stilled, that no matter how rough the waters are Jesus IS with us.

Billy Dean sang a song “It’s only the Wind” about fear in life as a child right through the fears of an adult including a breakup. Hoping that the belief that it’s only the wind that is stirring trouble and if we have faith God can turn that gust of wind into a gentle breeze. Likewise Tanya Tucker sang “Strong enough to Bend” about how winds can bend but didn’t break that tree out in the backyard because it was strong enough to bend without breaking. Our faith can bend but as long as we keep our faith and love for God Faith can be strong enough to bend. Keep the faith and keep God’s love close. Amen.