

Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan

August 24, 2014

Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Have any of you ever seen this commercial for LG Refrigerators? There is a teenage boy standing in front of a wide open refrigerator and staring in it. We get to hear his mom's inner thoughts while she watches him. She asks herself whether or not her son is hoping that his staring into the open refrigerator will magically make something new appear for him to eat. She thinks about it for a second, walks up to fridge, presses a button to open a hidden door and gives her son something he never saw. Magic.

She continues to think to herself, "I wonder where he gets this behavior from?" She immediately gets her answer because her husband comes into the room and does the exact same thing. This leads her to think, "The tree from which the apple fell." The commercial ends by touting the latest innovation of LG's refrigerator with its hidden door. I think this commercial is a humorous example of the trust which we form with things that meet our needs.

The funny part of the commercial is that some people think food magically appears in the fridge without anyone putting it there. Obviously, this can never happen. People need to put food into a fridge or a cupboard or a pantry or any other place for it to have food. Ultimately, our trust isn't in the fridge to provide food. Our trust is in the person who stocks the fridge for us. Our trust is in the choices of a spouse, parents or whoever else buys food to meet our need of hunger.

Time and experience teach us to trust the person who stocks the fridge. We trust them because they have met our needs in the past and we have confidence they will continue to meet our needs in the future. This is the lesson Jesus is trying to get across to us today. He wants us to trust that he will meet all of our needs. How can we build this trust with him? We will build this trust with him by spending time with him and gaining experience with him.

Our lesson comes at an incredibly tough time for Jesus. It begins, "**When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.**" What was the message Jesus had just heard? He just heard that John the Baptist, one of his best friends here on earth, had been murdered. John was a pillar of the church. He pointed to Jesus as the true savior of this world. He was a fearless and bold preacher of God's truths.

However, he was persecuted for his preaching. John was thrown into prison and killed because he spoke the truth of God's word. This news hit Jesus incredibly hard. He wanted to do what any of us do when we lose a loved one. He wanted to go and spend some alone time with his closest friends to grieve. So, Jesus goes and looks for a quiet place where he can grieve. He and his disciples get into a boat and sail to a remote part of the Sea of Galilee to be alone.

Yet, what happens? "**Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.**" The people followed him and found him. They wouldn't give him the peace he was looking for. They loved hearing him teach and they knew he had the ability to heal their sick and dying. How did Jesus react? "**Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached...**"

Jesus refuses to turn these people away. His heart is heavy with sorrow and grief, but it is also filled with compassion for these people. He knows they have come a long way to hear him. He knows they have

come a long way to see him. He knows they are weary and burdened by a load of sin that only he can remove from them. This burden of sin fills him with compassion and he spends the entire day with these people.

He spends all day meeting their greatest need because he spends all day reversing the curse of sin. He heals the diseases which sin has brought into this world. He spends all day telling them about the kingdom of God which he has brought into this world. He spends all day teaching and preaching the good news about himself. He spends all day watching and caring for them like a loving shepherd watching over his sheep.

Why does he spend all day telling them about the kingdom of God? He does it because this meets the greatest need the crowd had and it meets the greatest need we have. The greatest need we have in this world is to be made right with God. Each and every single one of us is sinful. This sin separates us from God. It makes us enemies of God who hate him. We can't do anything change this fact. This is a problem because if our situation doesn't change it means we will be sent to eternal suffering after we die.

This is the need Jesus meets. He fulfills our need to keep God's law and takes care of the greatest need we could ever have. He wins forgiveness for our sins. This forgiveness cost him everything because he earned it through his suffering and death on the cross. However he would not stay dead, but rise after three days. This is the message Jesus shared with the crowd all day long. This is the message which met their greatest need and this is the message which meets our greatest need.

Jesus uses this message through the power and working of the Holy Spirit to create faith and trust in our hearts. This trust realizes since he met our greatest need here on earth (the forgiveness of sins) that he will meet all of our needs here on earth. His disciples and the crowd were about to learn this first hand. **"As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.'"**

"Jesus replied, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' 'We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,' they answered." Jesus had just spent all day meeting the crowd's greatest need they would ever have by telling them about the kingdom of God. A pressing need arises when he is done telling the people about God's kingdom: there is a gigantic crowd of well over 5,000 people gathered together who don't have any food and haven't eaten all day.

The disciples panic. They didn't want to deal with the headache of trying to feed these people. They tell Jesus to get these people out of here and tone down their stress to make their lives easier. Jesus wouldn't have any of it. He had just spent all day ministering to the crowd by reaching out to them with the powerful message of the gospel. He used the message to work and create trust in him that he would meet people's needs.

He powerfully demonstrated the reward for trust in him. **"'We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,' they answered. 'Bring them here to me,' he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke**

the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Jesus used his power to feed and take care of the crowd's need of hunger. This was a powerful lesson to everyone who had gathered to hear him on this day. Jesus had spent all day working to create trust in their hearts that he came to satisfy their greatest need of all: he was their savior from sin. This purpose of this trust would be to make the connection that if Jesus has met my greatest need by being my savior from sin than he will meet other needs too. I just need to bring them to him.

However, this request is where it gets tough for us. Our prayers and requests to Jesus can often sound like marching orders for him to follow. Jesus, I need you to give me good health, a nice house, a fun car, a great job, a fancy smart phone, a big screen TV with satellite TV and a DVR. Oh yeah and more thing too: a secure retirement would be nice. I need all of these things Jesus. My life wouldn't be complete without them. Got it? Good.

Or maybe it goes to the other extreme. What about the Christians who are starving to death? What about Christians who don't have a home? What about the Christians who are being killed by extremists? What about them? Does Jesus meet their needs? Doesn't he care about them? Both of these examples are extremes, but realities we face. What is the key to overcoming both of these obstacles? The key to overcoming both of these obstacles is by building our trust up in Jesus.

How do we increase our trust in Jesus? By spending time with him and experiencing his love for us. His love drove him to the cross to take care of our greatest need and to forgive all of our sins. This will help us see that he will use his power to take care of our earthly needs. He won't promise us everything on our selfish prayer list, but odds are he won't put us out on the street either. We might not have the fanciest house, highest quality food or fastest car but he will make sure we get what we need.

He also uses his power to meet the needs of those who are starving, homeless or being killed. He promises them nothing can separate them from his love. He reassures them that their lot in life has no impact on their place in heaven. He gives them the quiet confidence to follow after him. Time and experience with Jesus teach us this. They teach us that Jesus meets all of our needs. He met our need for a savior and he will meet our earthly needs too. Amen.