

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So far this Lent, we have been invited to an extravagant feast,
been surprised by the joy of water turned into wine,
and called to love God and our neighbor.
Today, we learn: together, the impossible is possible.

In the feeding of the five thousand, we see
how Jesus prioritized meeting people's physical (not just spiritual) needs,
and his ability to mobilize a movement.¹
Perhaps this story can teach us a lot about
community organizing and communal care.
Much of modern society ingrains in us the idea that
we have to fend for ourselves.

But, time and time again in the bible, we see God
coming to the people of Israel,
Jesus coming for Jews and Gentiles,
the disciples becoming apostles and sent to the whole world.

Matthew peppers our gospel story today with
setting and images to evoke the saving of Israel in Egypt.
After their release from slavery in Egypt,
the Israelites wandered on foot in the wilderness.
Here the crowds follow Jesus "on foot" and he feeds them,
just as God feeds the people manna in the wilderness after the exodus.

Tending to the needs of a whole community
can seem too overwhelming a task.
Moses certainly had his moments and
I can certainly empathize with the wide-eyed disciples
when Jesus tells them, "You feed them."
Goodness, how often have I felt like the

¹ Tell Me Something Good

task before me in ministry far outweighed the resources or time available?
Yet, Jesus has compassion for the crowd and insists that they be cared for.

The good news is that what the disciples have to offer—
five loaves and two fish—is enough.

The good news is,
the crowd mobilizes into action
(perhaps haphazardly, without a ten-point strategic plan)
but they mobilize.

The good news is, the disciples' limiting beliefs don't limit what God does.
The good news is, everyone is fed

Just after learning that John the Baptist had been beheaded
by King Herod, Jesus and his disciples head to a deserted place,
perhaps seeking peace and quiet,
but many from the surrounding towns follow them.
Instead of turning them away,
Jesus expresses compassion and begins an impromptu teaching session.
As the day goes on, the disciples have logistics in mind and
urge Jesus to send the people back into the villages so
they can feed themselves.
Instead, Jesus presents them with an impossible task:
“You give them something to eat.”
Dumbfounded, the disciples can only fathom the
limitations and financial constraints of Jesus' suggestion.
Yet when they “go and see,”
their meager provisions multiply so that thousands are fed.

Abundance breaks forth in the very face of scarcity.
Because that's what God does.
Time and again throughout scripture,
and our own lives,
God provides.
When we're down with nowhere to turn,

when we're down to our last ounce of patience,
our last glimmer of an idea,
there, then, God provides.

Jesus has compassion on those before him.
He was moved to meet their need.
You give them something to eat, he tells the disciples.
And, they did.
Together, with Jesus, they did amazing work.
together we can meet needs that seem impossible.

The miracle of feeding the 5000+ focuses us on building networks of
collective care in order to meet people's needs.
Jesus models a way to be in community by coming together and
sharing what we have,
dispelling perceived impossibilities.
The good news empowers us to believe in the miracles that
can become possible through the power of community.

God doesn't start with the problem.
God starts with what God has to work with.
And, so do we.
We've been working at ministry together for 4.5 years now,
or about 3.5 years now after you called me as your pastor.
And, we're growing.
There is good energy and willing leaders,
generosity and joy in fellowship.

Our kids keep surprising and delighting us with
their energy, their gifts and joy in coming together.
Our teams and ministries have worked out some ways
they seek to carry out their mission that work for them,
while hoping to be flexible enough to fold in new ideas and energy.

And God is kindling a dream for Covenant.

A dream for Covenant to be a shelter,
a haven for those with cognitive decline
and their caregivers.

God has provided abundant space in the physical plant of our building.

Together, like the feeding of 5000 + women and children,
we can do what seems impossible.

Together, the financial constraints and
other concerns, can be overcome,
together.

All of our ministries bring us together.

The concept of compassion is deeply intertwined with
the idea of being "together."²

It involves the capacity to be present with
others' suffering and the desire to alleviate it.

Compassion is not just about observing suffering;
it is about wanting to reduce or end it.

Jesus recognized the people were hungry.

He first fed their spiritual hunger,
and then he fed their physical hunger out of compassion.

He wanted to do something about it.

Compassion is the willingness to be present within suffering,

In essence, compassion is the act of suffering together with others,
recognizing their pain and taking action to ease their suffering.

It is a powerful force that can change lives and restore the health of the world.

Together, the impossible is possible.

Sharing a meal brings us together as community.

Sharing a meal makes community.

Each Sunday we come together, repeat Jesus' words to his disciples
and share in our meal that sustains us.

It is a meal shared around a table that gathers and welcomes all.

² [Compassion Definition | What Is Compassion](#)

A meal that Jesus provides.
A meal that sustains and nourishes for our work together.
In this sacred meal Christ satisfies our deepest hungers,
heals our brokenness,
binds us together as one body,
and strengthens us for service in the world.³
Thanks be to God.
Amen.

³ Salmon, Marilyn. [Commentary on Matthew 14:13-21 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)