

“Give Them Something” - Matthew 14.13-21 - Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

In life there are always Easy Solutions. On my office desk I have one of those red EASY buttons from Staples. After you have solved a problem you can simply hit it and it responds with a slightly “tinny” voice, “That was easy!” It seems that many times in life and in ministry, there are easy solutions. They may not always be the best solutions or the right solutions, but they are easy. The disciples here had one as they told Jesus just send the crowd away to fend for themselves. Other easy solutions might be to - Sweep it under the rug or Put it off until it gets bad, because “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

Perhaps like us, and people who shop at Staples, whenever the disciples noticed there was a problem they asked Jesus to take the easy way out. When they saw that things might get difficult in Jerusalem, they asked Jesus not to go there. But Jesus had compassion and commitment in his solutions – to take care of people and to take up his cross.

I believe there is a lesson for all of us in the lesson that I see that Jesus taught the disciples that day when they discovered they had a big problem. There were lots of hungry people and not much food to go around. Watch and notice that Jesus called the disciples to do a few EASY things to solve this difficult problem. Might it give us an opportunity to learn and to do likewise:

1. Do something. Here it was to feed hungry people as he told the disciples, “*There’s no need to send them away. You give them something to eat.*” That is still needed today as there are hungry people. And so is making disciples and healing the sick and visiting the imprisoned – perhaps in jail or even people shut-in their own homes. Next Sunday for the first time in a long time we will be taking communion after church to shut-ins who are unable to be here on Sunday. Listen! What do you hear Jesus calling you to “do?” I am hearing him call me to do something about people who are what I call “the spiritual homeless” that is those without a church home. Some have been dislocated or disenfranchised through the disaffiliation process whereby some congregations have left the UMC but individuals within those congregations would like to stay in the denomination and not go with that congregation. Might we be a safe haven to welcome them to their new home?

2. Bring what you’ve got. It all adds up. The disciples seemed to think that they had nothing or at most or maybe more accurately “at least” very little to contribute. We may have a little of this or a little of that. Do you know the story of Stone Soup? Weary and hungry travelers enter a village asking for food only to discover that no one seems to have anything to give. So they tell the story of making Stone Soup and offer to share some with the villagers who must not have enough to even feed themselves. They find a “delicious” stone and place it in a large kettle of water and start it to boil. But as they taste the hot water the travelers note that it could use a little something extra, maybe some carrots or herbs which someone quickly brings to add to the pot. As the story goes on more items get eagerly added to spice up the stone soup until a hearty feast is shared with the villagers and travelers alike. Friends, we each can add an ingredient to the solution. I’ve seen this happen at potluck dinners and church picnics, and in November we will see it happen again in a Capital Campaign to help us payoff the church mortgage. Remember the disciples brought what they had - *five loaves of bread and two fish.*

3. Sit down and relax. Sometimes we get up in arms and all agitated about the bigness of our problems and how much we have to do. What if we hear the invitation to sit down and relax? I'm preaching to myself here, as this may be the hardest step for those of us are doers. Just relax, Jesus has got this! As I have been working on this message at the same time I was working on my mother's funeral message, I realized that I needed to take a day off and rest to be able to fully comeback to work refreshed this week.

4. Bless what you have. We gather our offerings and commitments and offer them to God's glory and purpose. Rather than focusing on what you do not have, thank God for what you do have. Be thankful not "thank-half-ful" or "thank-empty." Is the proverbial glass half-full or half-empty for you? I believe that as people of faith, we ought to thank more, rather than being thank-less!

5. Give what you've got. Jesus gave the loaves and fishes to the disciples who gave them to the people. And notice, in the end when they gathered the baskets the people gave back more than what they started with! Jesus also gave simple instructions and simple solutions. Jesus gave faith and hope as he taught and showed people how to live and to share.

We give thanks that Jesus gave his life for us. With that in mind, what are we able to give? Jesus calls us to "Give Them Something." As recipients of God's love, grace and forgiveness, let us give thanks and give it away to others this week. Alleluia and Amen.

Jesus Fed a Large Crowd

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 7/20/23

Jesus fed a large crowd,
With a few fish and bread.
Miracles happen in Jesus' name.
Hungry people are fed.

Jesus came to teach us,
All problems can be solved.
With Jesus 's help all things can be done,
By faith, if we're so resolved.

Reflect on all you've learned,
And the things you've learned to do.
Give thanks and praise to God above,
For God will see you through.