

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY JULY 21, 2024

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Pass the Fish

Based on Mark 6:30-44

So, is this story a miracle?

Or is this a story about sharing?

Or is this a story of building a community?

Possibility # 1 - It Was a Miracle

Plain and simple.

How else can you explain how two fish and five loaves of bread suddenly become enough to feed a large crowd and have food left over? Well, when Jesus is in the crowd, it's easy. You call it a miracle.

- Who can argue with that?
- We can't. and we still can't, thousands of years later.
- He is the Christ and He can do anything.

But that seems a little too easy, doesn't it? Let's us off the hook without thinking every hard. If you don't understand how something happened in the Bible, then call it a miracle and move on. Easy fix. But have you learned anything...

- About yourself?

- About Jesus?
- About community?

Possibility # 2 - To Share or Not to Share, that is the Question!

My youngest son Colin was born just a few months after I became Ordained as a Minister. Since I had recently transitioned from Student to Call, I did not qualify for maternity benefits, and arranged to take a year's worth of holidays during the month of August as my 'leave.'

Needless to say, when I was back in the pulpit, things were rather scattered for a bit. A terrible two, a toddler and an infant.

One of those early Sunday's back, I was running late, and asked my Clerk of Session to grab my printed sermon from the Baby Bag as I dealt with sticky hands. Now the Clerk at my first church was a decidedly firm bachelor of some age, who had absolutely no interest in small wriggly smelly things. He was a most serious Christian, who thought deeply and literally about the writings of our Christian forefathers and was as pious as St. Francis of Assisi

himself to be sure. A most devoted Christian, but not an easy man to work with.

In this small Sunday morning moment, the most horrified look came upon his face, as he attempted to bravely enter the Baby Bag with shaking hands, and find the printed sermon between bottles, toys, diapers, and Ziploc bags of fish crackers.

All this to say, no self-respecting mother would have gone to the seashore to listen to Jesus without snacks and drink boxes for the kids. Which means, the food was there, in the handbags and cloaks of those listening to Jesus. They just didn't want to share it.

- They were selfish.
 - What's mine is mine.
 - You stay on your blanket and I'll stay on mine.
- That is, until they were hungry enough, or were ashamed enough after seeing one young boy pass his small bit: two fish and five loaves of bread to the Saviour, no questions asked. They opened their cloaks in turn, and the food gathered quickly.

Possibility # 3 - Jesus Was Sharing More Than Food

When I was a Student Minister in Prince Edward Island, we were invited to an older, but very influential couple from one of the congregations. As was the unspoken rule, tea (Tetley, in case you were wondering) and sweets were served in the living room with the good china.

After a respectable amount of time, and with a previously agreed upon cue, John and I began to gather the children together when the tone changed in the room. "Please stay," they said, "you haven't had a chance to enjoy some shellfish." John sat back down.

And then as if by magic, the kitchen table became heaped with every possible shellfish the Island has to offer, home made bread and butter, roast chicken, glasses of milk for the children and more tea for the adults. Dessert followed with yet, more tea. John was so full on the drive home, he asked me to drive slowly over the potholes (which are of a size in PEI, that the rest of Canada has never experienced).

I thought we were sharing pleasant conversation. When in fact, we had been sharing:

- Time in each other's company
- Respect
- Wisdom of age and experience

- Listening to each other's stories
- Building common ground

Polite chatter = formal squares + tea
Building community = a banquet

Here too, the food had been present the whole time, but generosity was experienced once the conversation changed from: 'Minster to Parishioner', to 'Family to Family'. Common Ground. Community.

So, is this story a miracle? Or about sharing? Or about building a community of believers?

It is all these things. The miracle is, that Jesus' presence and His teaching, and his compassion to continue to care for them even though He was tired and spent, brought out from within each person gathered there, the desire to

- Hear more Good News
- Be a bigger person than before
- Practice kindness, sharing, and a generosity that came from the heart.

The warmth of Jesus' welcomed them all,

- A young boy set the example
- Shame was washed away by love turned into a feast.

- They were becoming a community of believers.

Those gathered broke bread together
They shared blankets on the grass.
Children played.
Mothers traded diapers for wipes.

This was the kind of kingdom Jesus was trying to create.
This is the kind of kingdom Jesus is still trying to create.
With miracles.
With sharing.
Building community.

Let us pray for miracles.
Let us be willing to share.
Let us continue to build the kingdom, with open and willing hearts, one fish at a time.