

East Hartford
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Alice O'Donovan
Is 55:1-5, Psa 145, Mt 14:13-21
A Better Way

Jesus was doing his thing back in Nazareth until he learned that Herod had decapitated his cousin John the Baptist, so he decided he needed a break - a place and time by himself to grieve, or pray or So he took off in a boat, crossing the lake in Galilee heading for a spot where he could be by himself.

The problem was - the crowds heard about it so they walked there en masse. When Jesus got there, he saw hundreds, perhaps thousands waiting for him - he sighed, then very compassionately, very gently he set about healing the sick ones.

It got along towards evening and his disciples took him to one side and told, him. "We've got a problem. We're a long ways from anywhere. We have no money and there is no place to buy food for them anywhere near here. We figure the best thing to do is send these folk home so they can stop on their way and buy something for supper.

Jesus said, "I have a better way. Have them stay and you feed them."

They said, "We have nothing except 5 loaves and 2 fish"

Jesus, "So bring that to me."

Jesus told the crowd to have a seat right there. He took the bread and the fish, looked up, blessed and broke the bread, gave it all to his followers, and his followers gave the food to the crowd of people.

Everybody ate until they were stuffed. When they cleaned up the left overs, there were 12 full baskets of food left.

Some have reported that there were 5000 men plus the women and the children.

Friends, Jesus' followers have a problem. The problem is the fear that has worried every provider of hospitality since time immemorial - too many people and not enough food, and this time it looks terribly real. There are lots of people with no banquet table in sight. Five loaves of bread and two fish must have looked like a meager supper, barely enough for just the disciples.

How did it happen that five loaves and two fish became more than enough? We'll never know the historical facts of the story - but when I consider the options - two come quickly to mind,

1 a magical multiplication of bread and fish - nice but mostly useless for the future church.

or 2 the greater miracle - the miracle of changed hearts, the miracle of growing generosity and sharing. . .

I like the greater miracle of growing generosity and sharing.

Maybe someone, perhaps even someone that Jesus had healed, offered their loaves and fish, [typo offered their *loves* and fish] then so did the folks sitting next to them and the folks sitting 2 rows over followed suit such that the disciples' work became a joyful ministry of directing traffic. Managing the flow of bread. Discovering bread here - delivering it to the hungry people there. Watching someone draw forth the lunch they had brought with them, seeing a neighbor catch the idea and share theirs as well.

Show of hands - how many of you are the cooks in your house? How many of you have had extra folks to feed on occasion? How many of you have put enough food on the table to feed an army - then after supper you still had leftovers - enough for yet another army? All of us have experienced both the fear, and the abundance.

How many of us worry about enough? Enough for supper? Being good enough, strong enough, wise enough, brave enough, loving enough. When we baptize infants we pray for the parents that they might be blessed with *enough* - *enough* courage, strength, wisdom, humor to raise their child to become, not just an adult, but an adult disciple of Jesus. Will there be enough money for the kids' college, for retirement, the rent, the mortgage, the taxes?

We share collective worries about enough and God knows the media benefits, making incredible profits from our fears - people have opinions on many sides of every issue or fear, those opinions need to be broadcast. People make movies "what if our worst fears were realized?", people make movies, "heroes overcome worst fears to become heroes" and so on ad infinitum. My goodness, if humanity did not worry about "enough", why the movie industry and the news industries would go broke. When you go home today, take the Sunday paper and just count how many stories rely on a worry or a fear.

The disciples worried about enough - not just about enough food, "send them home so they can buy supper in the village" but also

enough power - "when you come into your kingdom, give us the seats at your right and at your left",

enough love - the disciples would have turned the little children away.

Worrying about enough is a human experience and when the fear, "there won't be enough" gets too loud, people often respond badly selfishly. The disciples had a compassionate thought, "send them home now - because there is not enough food here." Thank God, Jesus proposed a better way, for here is the great miracle.

He took what they had among them, he blessed and broke and

gave what they had into the disciples' hands -and every one had enough. We tell and retell that story, and the story changes us, teaching us again and again, so that we learn to bring whatever we have that it may be blessed, broken, given away.

That story changes us as we see our few loaves become enough to feed a crowd or build a church or change the world. When I was ordained in 1988 - for a little while - I was it - the only openly gay UCC person to be ordained in CT. It had taken many bits of courage given into God's hand, by many people in prior years to achieve that milestone here in our neighborhood.

Today, many of our CT pulpits are filled with gay clergy, and many straight clergy are choosing to limit their search to ONA churches or churches in the process of becoming ONA. Today LGBT folk can be legally married in nearly 20 states- all because little bits of courage given unto God, have been blessed, broken, given, and multiplied so that our world is a very different place than it was 26 years ago.

Remember these words - *Whenever - Whatever*. Whenever we entrust, whenever we give whatever we have unto God it is blessed, broken, given away. There it grows, just as generosity grew until they were taking up 12 baskets of leftovers, so it all grows - love, generosity, courage, kindness, forgiveness - any, all of that good stuff given unto God grows and the world is blessed. Such is indeed a Better Way, let us therefore walk in it for this is the way of Christ. Amen