

God Will Provide With Little to Spare

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In my sermon preparation for today, I read the following by Douglas Hare in the Interpretation Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew: “The story suggests that God will provide with little to spare, but there must be no greed or waste, or some will go hungry.”

As I thought, prayed and reflected on this text, I couldn't get this statement out of my head. For me, Hare made me reflect on the abundance that I have...the abundance that I do not always share with others.

Our gospel text for today gets straight to the point about feeding many people. The text is usually called the feeding of the 5,000; however the 5,000 does not include

the women and the children. Most likely it could be called the feeding of the 20,000 according to a variety of sources.

That aside, Jesus goes out into the wilderness to pray after learning about John the Baptist's death. This very large crowd follows him and wants him to heal them and feed them. The disciples want Jesus to turn the crowds away so he had time to gather his thoughts and have time for mourning and prayer. But Jesus doesn't do that. Instead, he challenges the disciples to feed the crowd.

The disciples were perplexed. How could they feed so many people with only five loaves of bread and two fish? The disciples were quick to come to the assumption that everyone can take care of themselves. The crowds were to go back into the nearby village and buy their own food or go without.

Jesus challenged the social structure of the time. He turned the disciples' thinking into something different. Instead of the crowds taking care of their own welfare, Jesus demonstrates the abundance of God's grace by feeding the large crowd.

The other thing that Jesus does after he blesses the bread that is so significant is that he gives the loaves of bread to the disciples to distribute. I can only imagine that this must have been a humbling experience for the disciples. They learned from Jesus, but now it was different, they were putting into practice what they had learned. They were doing counter-cultural things.

Food wasn't only for the elite in Jesus' eyes. In God's kingdom there is enough for everyone. Or at least there should be.

Back to the quote that I talked about earlier, "God will provide with little to spare, but there must be no greed or waste, or some will go hungry."

According to Congregation Connection, a resource linking ELCA World Hunger to worship and congregational life, “one out of every six of our neighbors world-wide lacks access to safe drinking water. Water-related illnesses are the leading cause of human sickness and death. In many countries, a water issue is the primary reason people are unable to rise out of poverty.”

How often do we take the blessings in our lives for granted? We have clean water to drink and food on our tables. We may even know an individual or a family who does not have these basic necessities of life.

I am humbled each and every time I go home to Pennsylvania to visit my family. I’m reminded of the drastic differences in our own country when it comes to basic resources.

Our youth are humbled at work camp when they meet and interact with families who have no means to fix their homes from mold, leaks, and other household problems.

Are there things in our lives that we can share? When we go to the grocery store, do we think about God's children who are homeless and have no food on a regular basis?

We live in a throw-away society. When something breaks, we generally go out and replace it. Are there things we can fix, reuse, or live without?

God provides us with all that we have. Douglas Hare reminds us in one simple sentence that God will provide for all, but there must be no greed or waste.

Hunger is a problem throughout the globe. There are ministries that help address hunger by providing food, education, and other resources. We can support these ministries simply by learning about them.

At Chrysalis this past year, we learned about a ministry called Blood Water Mission. This ministry promotes clean blood and clean water in Africa while addressing underlying injustice issues of poverty, injustice, and oppression. The Band “Jars of Clay” started this ministry and challenges us to think about others. In their video presentation at Chrysalis, the band encouraged us to think about what it meant to live our lives without some of the things we take for granted. For example, they challenged us to give up buying extra snacks and then donating the money we would have used for that to help dig a well in Africa.

In verse 16 in the Greek, the you is a command to the disciples. “Jesus said to them, they need not go away; **you** give them something to eat.”

Jesus commands the disciples, both the original twelve and all of us who profess Jesus as Lord to remember and help those who do not have the basic necessities for life.

We have a lot to think about in our lives. In the many blessings that God has given to us, are we gracious in return and share them with others so there is enough for everyone? As we discern things we can change in our lives to follow God's call to share resources with each other, let us remember that all we have comes from God.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.