

Loaves and Fishes

John 6:1-14

Today we hear the only miracle that is found in all four Gospels, the feeding of the five thousand. The fact that this story appears in all four Gospels alerts us to how important this story was, and still is, to people who follow Christ. **Jesus** is the one who feeds us. **Jesus** is the source of our nourishment. **Jesus** is the host at every table we join. **Jesus** lives in the abundance of God.

Let us pray in the abundance of Jesus, "Loving God, you are the One who feeds us. You give us this day our daily bread. You are the living spring of water that quenches our thirst forever. May all that we say and do assist you in feeding the world, and may there always be leftovers so we may invite everyone to join us. Amen."

Our story opens with the minutes from a meeting of Jesus' Board of Trustees. We usually call Jesus' Board of Trustees his disciples. Anyway, the Board is meeting with Jesus and talking about how expensive it is going to be to fulfill Jesus' mission opportunity for that day, providing lunch for 5000. Jesus says, "**Where are we going to buy bread** to feed these folks?" Notice, he did not say, "**How** are we going to buy bread." Jesus asked where the bread was going to come from. Philip answers, "Whoa, six months of wages or offerings wouldn't be enough to buy this much bread!" Philip ignores the **how** question and goes right to the **how much** question. He does the math: at minimum wage of \$7.75 an hour, six months wages is about \$8,000. That is a lot of bread. 1,600 loaves at today's price of \$5 at Foodland. Jesus' Trustees looked at this cost and quickly voted, "No way." But, there is always an enterprising Trustee with another idea, and Andrew, Peter's brother, said, "Well, here is a boy with 5 loaves and two dried fish." Can you just hear the other Trustees laughing at Andrew? Some trustees say, "Oh Andrew. What a great idea. Now we are only 1595 loaves short!"

But Jesus did not listen to the scarcity Trustees. Instead, Jesus looked out and did not just see a crowd of people and numbers and money. Jesus saw people's needs. Jesus felt their hunger. Jesus had compassion on them. So Jesus responded in two ways. First, Jesus asked the disciples to have everyone sit down in the grass. Why? Why would Jesus have everyone sit down? [brainstorm].

>>>> The transition from standing and milling around to sitting marked a transition from being hungry people to being fed people, from being focused on themselves to focusing on Jesus. Imagine this huge crowd- 5000 men and other women and children—sitting in a field. Do you think we could sit 5000 people on our front lawn? How would you like to feed that crowd? But now, as they sat, they could all see Jesus. And what did Jesus do?

With everyone seated so they could see, Jesus blessed the bread. The tradition was the bread was held up high to God and the blessing was delivered. Everyone could see what was going on. Everyone knew Jesus was blessing the bread. And then Jesus began to distribute the bread, trusting in the abundance of God. [Stand in aisle and bless bread and dried fish and pass around].

>>>>> All four Gospels tell this feeding story. All four Gospels say everyone ate their fill and there were leftovers—12 baskets of leftovers. Jesus fed the people, and there was more than enough, and there were even some leftovers, a mark of a

good host that conscientiously provided abundant hospitality. And what about this number 12? It represented there was enough for not just extra guests to eat, but enough bread for **all** to eat. Remember twelve represented ALL the tribes of Israel, enough for **all**.

Jesus feeds everyone, with leftovers to spare. Jesus takes what is available, blesses it in front of everyone, and then feeds everyone, with leftovers to offer those not yet seated in the grass.

During my time here at Waiola, I have heard our kūpuna talk of past times when there was not enough, when the leadership looked at what was available and shook their heads, knowing the needs of the people were greater than the resources they could see. During these times at Waiola there were two responses, the same two responses Jesus encountered standing there with his own Board of Trustees. One response was the factual realistic response of scarcity: "We don't have enough." The other response was the faith response of abundance, "Here is what we do have, let's have faith in God and see what happens." In those times, our kūpuna stepped out in faith knowing God would respond to Waiola's needs. And the fact that we are still here, proves acting in faith through God's abundance was the correct choice. We have seen this with our own eyes since this last winter. We did not have enough money to redo the walls and roof of this building, and yet, in faith, we began the project acting through the abundance of God, and through our prayer and action and God's grace, our needs were filled. The roof and wall repair have been paid for, and because we believe in the abundance of God, we now anticipate leftovers.

When Jesus fed the 5000 it was a miracle. How did it happen? We don't know, but the baskets of 5 loaves and 2 fishes were blessed and 12 baskets of leftovers were miraculously returned after all were fed. We received the blessing of God's loaves and fishes, and returned back to God far more than what was given to us. Miracles like feeding the 5000 did not just happen 2000 years ago. Miracles happen here at Waiola all the time. Ask Auntie Grale or Auntie Alice or Auntie Barbara or Kahu Pono 'Ānela. When we share our 5 loaves and 2 fishes here at Waiola today, our gifts to the church are multiplied as aloha back into our community and world, returning to us as far more than what we originally gave.

We are blessed right now to be on budget for our expenses in our church. But, as usual, our income slows down in the summer, as it does in all churches when members turn to family and other things. Our scripture today invites us all to consider renewing our summer gifts in response to the blessing of God in loaves and fishes, so that after all are fed there will always be leftovers for everyone. While cash may be a little tight this summer, we believe in miracles and know through God's grace and the gratitude and generosity of this congregation that **there will be leftovers**.

We believe in miracles. We believe in the abundance and grace of God. This story today is not about **others** 2000 years ago. This story is about **us**, here, today. Let us bless the loaves and fishes that we do have from God, and pass them among us, and then re-gather the baskets after all are satisfied, anticipating abundant leftovers in grace. Amen.