

Sermon John 6 1 15 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent 1 Year Series

Sermon: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

Text: John 6:1-15 (vv.5-9) – Jesus feeds the Five Thousand

Theme: Why are you concerned about tomorrow?

Goal: To strengthen our faith in God's daily provision

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Suppose I'm a teenager and I go to a picnic with my school. My mother prepares a nice lunch for me. I enjoy the day, playing with my classmates, running up and down. When it's time for lunch, all sit in big circles to eat the lunch and to chat; and some share their lunch with others. But I go to an isolated corner and eat my lunch by myself... Would you, my classmates, approve my behavior?

I – A huge picnic

Imagine now a huge picnic, with five thousand men, plus the women and children. Had everyone brought their lunch? No. Even Jesus was concerned with the multitude, what would they eat; because they were gathered there to meet Jesus. It was a huge rally to listen to Jesus. It had not been planned nor organized. People just came together. No one was responsible for coffee and tea...

Then Jesus raised the question to one of His disciples, Philip, who was from a nearby city: "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Maybe Philip knew a bakery in that area. Philip did a quick account and replied: "Eight month of wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" – Philip was concerned about the budget. They didn't have so much money on the disciples' savings account...

But another disciple, Andre, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Note the detail: "five *small* barley loaves" and

“two small fish”. They were not big. And barley loaves were cheap bread, the bread of the poor. It was not wheat bread.

I don't know how they realized that the boy had his lunch with him. But when he was introduced to Jesus, he was willing to give it to Jesus. He didn't even ask: *Let me have a bite first, and then take the rest...* He gave what he had to Jesus ... like the poor widow in the temple, who gave the last two coins she had.

I'm concerned about our Luther's Loot, the food donations we monthly collect for the needy. Very few people are bringing some donations. It doesn't cost to you to take one kilogram of rice, or maize meal, or a bottle of cooking oil and so on.

Remember to share, like the little boy did it. And Jesus multiplied it and fed more than five thousand people. Help to multiply the daily bread that God has given you.

II – The daily bread

*Food binds people together.* We prayed in the Collect for this Sunday: *'You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul... God's mercies are new every morning* (Phil Brandt, p.2, 6, 7). Even so, there are lots of fight and mistakes about food and God's providence. Luther: *We must trust that God will provide for us. For in this world, faith is under constant siege either by wealth on the one hand, or by poverty on the other... The rich despise God's Word and opine that they need neither God, nor his Word. The poor ask, 'How can I accept the Word, follow and be obedient to it when I am so poor and need something to eat and to drink?'... Through this miracle, therefore, Christ, our dear Lord, teaches his disciples and us Christians not to fret nor to be greedy for great wealth, because what we need will be provided. Only believe that the heavenly Father will sustain you... Whether I have much or little, I will trust in God to sustain me according to his good pleasure, and I will let him worry if and when I require more; for I have heard the Gospel*

*lesson preached, how Christ fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes in the wilderness; and why should I then worry or be in doubt! - We should, therefore, use this incident for the sake of exercising and strengthening our faith* (Quoted by Phil Brandt, p. 49, 50, 51, 53).

Have you ever gone hungry? I doubt. When I went through this story in one of the classes in Mozambique, and I asked them: Have you ever been hungry? And they answered immediately: *Many times, pastor; many times...* It broke my heart...

I have a memory of the beginning of my ministry, when the salary was always shorter than the month, that one evening we ate the last piece of bread we had. There was no bread for us and the children for the next morning, and no money to buy it. Suddenly one of our members just popped in and said: *Pastor, I found a new bakery with good bread, and I bought one for you...*

We have a nice prayer in the Book of Proverbs <sup>(30:8,9)</sup>: “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

Luther said more: *With this miracle, therefore, Christ wants to draw us to faith, so that we trust him. In gist, he is saying, I will indeed sustain you, only believe. If you do, I will cause two fish to become three thousand in my hand, and one loaf of bread a thousand. Year of year I cause this to happen. In winter the trees are bare, having neither leaves nor fruit; but as soon as summer arrives the trees put forth leaves, cherries, plums, apples, pears, and so on... The same is true for the grain; it grows from the earth in the field and is gathered into huge piles. Who clothes the trees with leaves and fruit? Who causes the grain to grow in abundance? Is it not He who with two fish and five loaves of*

*bread fed five thousand men?... Christians should recognize God's wonders and from them learn to rely upon Him. Why would we even want to despair?* (Quoted by Phil Brand, pp. 54-56).

III – Left over

“When they had all had enough to eat, Jesus said to His disciples: Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” How much food is wasted every day? Statistics prove that there is enough food for all the people in the world! The problem is the distribution: Some have too much and waste it; and some have nothing. We will not solve the problem of all humankind; but we can help to solve the problem of one or two people, not wasting, but sharing what we have. – On another account of this miracle, Jesus said to His disciples: “You give them something to eat” (Matthew 14:16). We are the hands of Jesus to multiply what He gives us, so that others don't need to suffer hunger.

Conclusion: When we read more in this Chapter 6 of John, Jesus used this episode to warn people not only to look for the daily bread, but to look for the Bread of Life as well, - referring to Himself as the Living Bread that God sent from heaven. As Christians, who receive with abundance the Living bread from heaven in the Holy Gospel and in the Sacraments – even the holy bread = the very body of Christ in the Holy Communion. We receive it with a thankful heart, both, the daily bread on our table, and the spiritual bread of God's Word. We share both of them as we have opportunity, trusting that we will not lack anything when we share, but what we share will be multiplied in Jesus' hands, like the lunch the little boy gave to Jesus in our story for this Sunday. May God give us all a faithful heart to trust in Him always, and to share with others what He gives us in abundance. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 26 March 2017