

Lectionary B July 25, 2015  
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, IN  
Roberta Meyer

2 Kings 4:42-44  
Psalm 145:10-18  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
John 6:1-21

### Godonomics

My grandma could feed an army with one pound of hamburger and whatever she had in her pantry. 5000 people was probably more than she could handle, but she sure could make a small amount of meat seem like a banquet for the family. And if company would walk in, there was always plenty for them, too. She just added something or the other to the pot and we were all satisfied. We never had 12 baskets of left overs, but there was usually enough left over for a midnight snack, or lunch the next day. Grandma never doubted in Jesus' miracles and always had faith that there was plenty for everyone who came to her table.

Today, we start a five week series of lessons from John 6. They are called the "Bread" lessons. Yes, for five weeks we are going to listen to what God has to say about bread. More on the point, we are going to listen to what God is saying about "the Bread of Life." We begin with this story about Jesus taking a little boy's lunch consisting of five buns and two fish, and after thanking God for this meal, Jesus starts passing it out to the humongous crowd of 5000 people. When we really think about this story, it seems pretty unbelievable. Do the math—it's impossible. Impossible, that is for me, or you, or even my grandma—but not impossible with Jesus.

I like what Nadia Boltz Weber has to say about this lesson. "A God who created the universe out of nothing, that can put flesh on dry bones-nothing, that can put life in a dry womb of nothing, **NOTHING is God's favorite material to work with.** Perhaps God looks upon that which we dismiss as "nothing" "Insignificant" "worthless" and says "Ha! Now *that* I can do something with."

Some people try to explain away this miracle by saying what really happened was that when Jesus took the little boy's lunch, others chipped in with their picnic baskets until everyone was sharing and everyone had enough. But that is what one commentator said was "Humanomics". That's when we humans try to make things make sense in our minds, by our standards. And the sharing idea is a good one. Learning to share our abundance with others is always a good thing. But when we limit God to our way of doing things, aren't we sort of making ourselves equal to God? Aren't we playing a game with God seeing if we can step in and be our own god for a day? I've tried that. Thinking I understand God's way of doing things and even arguing with God and telling God what I think is best. Well, guess what, my humanomics never works. My math skills cannot make something out of nothing. That is why God is God. That's the kind of God we need in this world when the best "humanomics" comes short. We need miracles like the ones we read about today.

And that goes for the twelve disciples, too. In this story Jesus is trying to test them, to see if they understand who he is. He asks, "*Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?*" Jesus

knows what he is going to do, he just wants to see if the twelve, who have been with him, traveling and who have already seen him make water into wine, and heal a bunch of people,—he just wants to see if they get it yet. But no, they don't. Phillip is all worried about how much it is going to cost. He responded, *“Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.”* But, hello, they were out in the middle of nowhere—Jesus asked where, not how much it was going to cost.

Andrew maybe got it a little. *“There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that's a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this.”* So at least Jesus has something to work with. I can almost hear Jesus sigh. *“At last.” “Make the people sit down.”* On this huge grassy place 5000 people sat down and Jesus thanked God for five measly pieces of bread and a couple fish. Can you imagine being there, watching this?

Then Jesus began passing out the food. John doesn't say his gave it to his disciples to distribute. John's Gospel says that Jesus gave it to them. And everyone had all they wanted. Here's the part the disciples missed and I think we miss it to. The disciples missed the fact that they were included in the crowd of people Jesus was feeding. After all, they were out there in the middle of nowhere just like the rest of the people. They obviously didn't have any food to contribute, or it seems they would have gotten it out of their backpacks when Andrew came up with this little boy's lunch. So they had to be part of the hungry crowd, too, right?

That's the way we are. We separate those we feed from ourselves and pretend we are ok. I know I have left the Mission Meal before hungry, because I saw myself as the one feeding, not one of the hungry. But the truth is, we are all hungry for food only a miracle God can provide. That's what this is all about.

It is too easy for us to become overwhelmed by the hunger of the multitudes. We fret and try to figure out what we have at our disposal that might feed them and it drives us kind of crazy because we keep coming up short – short on compassion, short on skill, short on will. We think of how God needs us to feed God's people and so we depend on our own resources and then we panic when we see how little there is. A few crumbs is what it can seem like. It's never enough. What's going to cost to do what Jesus wants **us** to do? But there is a game-changer in this miracle. The more we use our hands to do God's work, the more we need to realize we are part of the hungry crowd that Jesus knows needs to be fed. And Jesus loves us just as much as he loves every other hungry soul in that crowd. We are loved because we are God's children.

Boltz Weber explains it this way. *“There is not one category of people who teach and one who need to learn. There is not one category of people who heal and one who need wholeness. There is not one category of people who minister and one who need care. There is just one category: hungry sinners in need of a savior. So together we come away with Christ to sit in the grass and be fed...”*

Sharing is a good thing but we all need a Savior who can work miracles out of nothing. That's what Jesus wants us all to know here, along with those twelve guys that followed him around. We are loved just because we are God's children and Jesus came to be the Bread of Life for our every need. It is through the nourishment of his sacrificial love that we are able even to have faith in this love.

As you come to the table today to “take and eat this miracle food, Christ’s body given for you” take a moment to pause and let the miracle soak in. God loves you just the way you are. You don’t have to do anything, in fact you can’t do anything to make God love you more or less. It’s free for all of us. It took a while for the disciples to get this. I think my grandma got it. Godonomics is the miracle we all desperately crave. Our God takes our nothings and turns them into a feast. So what do you say? The table is set. Wow, I didn’t realize how hungry I am. Amen.