

Luke 9:12-17
September 30, 2018

¹² As the day declined, the Twelve said, “Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the farms or villages around here and get a room for the night and a bite to eat. We’re out in the middle of nowhere.” ¹³⁻¹⁴ “You feed them,” Jesus said. They said, “We couldn’t scrape up more than five loaves of bread and a couple of fish—unless, of course, you want us to go to town ourselves and buy food for everybody.” (There were more than five thousand people in the crowd.) ¹⁴⁻¹⁷ But he went ahead and directed his disciples, “Sit them down in groups of about fifty.” They did what he said, and soon had everyone seated. He took the five loaves and two fish, lifted his face to heaven in prayer, blessed, broke, and gave the bread and fish to the disciples to hand out to the crowd. After the people had all eaten their fill, twelve baskets of leftovers were gathered up.

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

Every time we gather as the people of God is a time to give thanks and praise to the Lord our God. It is a time of worship as we pay homage or give reference to our Creator, Redeemer, Savior, and the one who sustains our entire being. Each time we gather in the name of Jesus Christ to praise our Lord we make a statement – that God alone is the source of all we have. God alone can rescue. No one or nothing else can. Not money. Not power. Not fame. Not government. No one is above God.

When we gather for worship we live out exactly what the Psalmist calls all of creation to do. Praise the Lord! All you angels. All you host of heaven. Sun and moon and shining stars. Sing praises all you shining stars. Praise the Lord heavens and waters. Praise the Lord sea monsters, fire and hail, snow and fog, wind and all things doing God’s will. Praise the Lord mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars, beasts and cattle, creeping things and flying things, sovereigns of the earth, prince, rulers and all peoples

of the world. Young men and maidens, old and young together. Let them praise the Lord! Why? Because it was God who commanded and created everything listed above; which, is a representation for the entire created order, every person, animal, organism, reptile, amphibian, insect, flying creature – everything is included in this Psalm to give praise to the One who created them.

That is what we gather for today. Our annual outdoor worship is an intentional service in which we gather outdoors in the splendor and beauty of God’s creation to hear the leaves rustle in the wind, feel the cool fall air on our cheeks, read and sing under the light of the sun, hear the sweet sound of the birds sing their own praises to their Creator, take in the smells of early autumn, and for an hour simply be one with the entirety of creation. While, we can’t physically be outdoors this morning we do the next best thing as we face the windows and look to the east and the rising Sun ushering in a new day the Lord has given us.

When I select texts for this worship service I do so with the intent of connecting them to the theme of the day – creation. The Old Testament reading from the first chapter of Genesis is a no-brainer. It comes from the first of two creation accounts and speaks of God’s creating handiwork and naming all that God breathed life into as good – very good. Likewise, Psalm 148 was a shoe-in. And then I came to the selection of a Gospel passage and I pondered and finally settled on the feeding of the 5,000 account

as recollected by Luke. This is one of my favorite miracle stories Jesus performed and clearly it was also a favorite of the four authors of the gospels as it is the only miracle found in each of the 4 gospel accounts. It's a powerful story giving us an epiphany of who Jesus is. He is God's Son who just as God rained down manna on the people of Israel in the wilderness also has the power to bring forth an abundance of food to feed a large crowd when only a very small amount was on hand. It is a picture of the kingdom of God Jesus is ushering in where all are invited to the banquet of our Lord. It is a story that is a model for discipleship as Jesus calls forth the 12 to feed the crowd. But its also an invitation as this most well-known miracle of Jesus is not done alone. Jesus uses those same disciples whose only understanding of how to provide food for all these people was to send them into town. There wasn't enough. Despite all of that, Jesus has them share in the work he is carrying out to feed the crowds because Jesus knows for well there will be enough for all!

But what drew me to this passage was the earthiness of it. Here is this massive throng of people who have been following Jesus. The warm rays of the sun God created so many years ago shining down upon their heads. Luke doesn't give us the exact location of this miracle other than stating they are in a very remote location; most likely, scholars place this somewhere on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee. Thus, it may have been fertile land; so, I picture some trees and grasses based on some quick photo

searches of the area. Perhaps, they could have even seen the Sea of Galilee off in the far distance. The day was dawning near and the crowd was hungry. Jesus had already filled them spiritually with his teaching as verse 11 just before our passage this morning states, “He welcomed them and taught them about the Kingdom of God, and he healed those who were sick.” But now, he needed to address their physical hunger; even, given the fact little resources were on hand. Nonetheless, Jesus takes what he has - five loaves of bread and two fish. He looks up to heaven, blesses this food, breaks the bread and gives it to his disciples to feed the masses and everyone ate their fill.

In Luke, Jesus is found teaching often in the synagogues and even performing a miracle or two there. However, much of his ministry, teaching, miracles and healings take place out on the fringes of society in tiny villages, fishing towns, and in remote locations. We find him in prayer in the wilderness or high upon a mountain top. We find him gathered with his disciples and with large groups of people certainly made up of Gentiles and those of Jewish faith. People well off and people with next to nothing to their name. People with pedigree and people with zero status. People who are healthy and people who are sick. In this outdoor setting, we catch a glimpse of the kingdom as all of creation is gathered before the great Shepherd in what truly maybe a glimpse of the glorious banquet of heaven. We could even call this a service of worship as Jesus

delivers the sermon, presides over a great feast and at some points sends the crowds away. An outdoor worship service; just, as we had planned this morning.

Even though we can't be outdoors, we are in this space able to look out these windows and see the grandeur of creation. We gather, we hear the word, we share in the meal Jesus offers and then we, too, are sent. In this passage, Jesus uses common, ordinary, everyday items created by God to perform a miracle. To feed the crowds. To heal them of their hunger. We will see God work through the means of creation yet again to bring about the final act of healing and redemption as Jesus' journey to Jerusalem continues and he is hung high upon a rough-hewn, old rugged cross made from the timber of an ancient tree. But, we know that is not the end. God will raise him up as a stone is rolled away from a dusty old tomb hollowed out of a hillside. God created all things. God is at work in all things and God uses what God created to do a new thing as God yet again brings life, healing, and salvation to all people who believe in the name of God's Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is a day when we give thanks for creation and God's handy-work; but it is also a day, like any time we gather together, to proclaim the miracle of Easter. Jesus Christ has died. Jesus Christ has risen. Jesus Christ will come again!