

***DINNER WITH 5,000 OF MY CLOSEST FRIENDS*****Luke 9:10-17****(Read Luke 9:10-17)**

**Intro:** Back in 1984 or 1985, Ken Danielson and I did our first mother-daughter banquet here at ABC. I remember that it was on a Saturday at noon and it was more like a luncheon than a banquet. You see, we were really extravagant, we made those ladies baked potatoes with lots of different toppings.

We'd never done anything like that before. We had no idea how to plan. But it apparently went well, because a few years later the men at Speedwell Heights Brethren in Christ, led by, Yours Truly, began having Mother Daughter banquets every year in the early part of May around Mother's Day. We had the time of our lives and we didn't do too shabby. The ladies loved it!

That tradition carried on to our next church, Manheim BIC, where my friends Carl, who was one of our deacons and a hunting buddy, and Nate, who was chef at a popular local restaurant, hosted yearly Mother Daughter banquets attended by 200 to 250 women. We organized, prepared, and recruited a large crew of Manheim Men to serve the meals. I learned so much from those two guys that still serves me well.

We began by figuring out how many people to expect and then we would get the meat and pasta and bread accordingly. It took time, actually, it took days of preparation. But it was always fulfilling and there was unique and precious camaraderie that came with serving together as we served others.

Since we've been here at ABC we have had our annual Christmas Eve Party at our house. We've had to cancel it for the last 3 Christmases because of COVID and cold, and we miss it. But it is a big undertaking. We've had as many as 86 people in our house. And you all come expecting to eat – as you should. And we have to figure out how much to prepare so we don't have too much or too little. Fortunately we've always had too much. Unfortunately that's why your pastor is fat because he eats the leftovers.

Jesus fed well over 5,000 people, making our 86 in our house and 250+ at Manheim look like a bedtime snack. The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels, so it's obvious that the disciples realized its huge significance – later. Right now, as far as they were concerned, Jesus had no plan. Little did they know, he WAS the plan! There was no Sam's Club, GFS, Costco, or Aldi. In fact he didn't even have willing helpers. He just had incredulous disciples who said “Are you kidding me?!” when he told them to provide dinner for a huge crowd of people on that hillside in the back of beyond. This amazement was not hard to fathom since all they had was a borrowed lunch from a little boy that consisted of five barley loaves and two fish. You see, this was before the days of Lunchables. But Jesus gave us another lesson from the dinner table when he fed those 5,000 men, and probably that many more women and children, with that tiny lunch.

It all began with Jesus and his disciples heading out into the wilderness for some rest and relaxation. They were also avoiding Herod who was much too interested in making sure the competition was eliminated. As a matter of fact, he had just served up the head of Jesus's cousin, John the Baptist on a platter. Jesus was on a mission that had him pointed at Jerusalem. But the reprieve they were looking for didn't happen. His following followed Jesus into the wilderness . . .

**They were drawn to Jesus by his message of love and truth**

- I'm sure the disciples, who were exhausted after returning from a ministry assignment (look at the passage preceding our text), felt their hearts sink as they realized their retreat plans were trampled under thousands of sandals. But, our text indicates that Jesus took the opportunity to continue his ministry as he welcomed the crowds and continued his work of announcing the kingdom of God and healing the people. He never missed a chance like this.
- That's part of the huge significance that made this the only miracle recorded in all of the Gospels. Jesus's message didn't mince words. He called people to righteousness and away from sin. He had preached in another sermon on a hillside almost directly across the Sea of Galilee from where he fed these 5,000, that he had not come to change a single thing from the commandments of Hebrew scripture (Matthew 5:17-20). But as he preached the truth and nothing but the truth, he did it with incredible love. People had not seen this before. They were drawn by the love and healed by the words.
- He was also concerned about the physical needs of people. So he was healing them. They followed him for that too.

- But the end of the day had arrived and they were far from anything, and certainly far from food. So the disciples, weary to the bone, pointed out the obvious: “*Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.*” Luke 9:12. But, instead of agreeing to their plan, Jesus says . . .

### **YOU do it!**

- Well actually, v. 13 puts it this way, “*You give them something to eat.*” The disciples thought Jesus was so tired he was talking in his sleep – that’s the only way he would suggest such an impossible task. But he was teaching his disciples – all of them – the twelve who were there with him that afternoon, and all of us who would read it in the Gospels down through holy history until now.
- When Jesus tells us to do something – he expects us to do it – with his strength and miraculous power. As we are obedient to his leading, he expands our tiny offerings to provide for any need no matter how huge. G Campbell Morgan writes this, “*Now mark his method. He took what they had. It was their loaves and fishes that fed that crowd; their lives through his hands. We say, what can we do to feed the hungry world? We have nothing except—and then we name the things which mark our poverty. The answer is that he takes these very things, and makes them the media of supply.*” Morgan then gives an illustration of how this happened in his own ministry, and he finishes his comments with, “*Let us bring him our five loaves. It is no good our trying to feed a crowd with our loaves. It is good bread, wholesome bread, but it is no use our trying to feed the crowds with it. Give it to Christ. He will take the worthless things of our poverty, and he will multiply them to the feeding of the crowd.*”
- This is a teachable moment. Last week we approved a budget that was higher than the year before and also higher than what we received last year for our expenses. The reasons are valid for that increase, we need to meet our obligations for rising expenses of all kinds, not the least being our heat and electric costs. Ministry costs money. Nobody is wasting our tithes and offerings. In fact, all of us in leadership here at ABC do not spend money when it's not there. I’ve heard discouragement this week – that we won’t meet that budget because it’s too big. Well, it is. But God is bigger, and I think that we can learn from this very message from a mealtime. The message is, that even though we might not start with much, as we are faithful, and do what Christ asks us to do, there will be leftovers.
- Tim Chester comments in a similar way by talking about having a theology of leftovers. He points out that we need to trust God as the infinite provider of resources. So much so that we have leftovers. In this case, at this lakeside meal time, over 5,000 people later, there were 12 baskets full leftovers.
- Chester goes on to point out that when it comes right down to it, we disciples can't provide for the people. We have the power of Jesus, but it's his power. We share the ministry of Jesus, but it's his ministry. “*It's easy for us to play at being Messiah. We want to help, and it's right that we do show love as the context demands. But we need to be careful not to think that we can solve people's problems for them. It's not good for us; if we try to save the world we'll quickly burn out. What we offer people is Jesus. His death is sufficient and complete. He's the provider. He's the host. Not us.*” F. B. Meyer adds this after a heading that reads, “*The fragments feed the distributors.*” “*More was left over than had been possessed at first. To impart to others is to gain for oneself. Fling the seed generously. With what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you!*”
- Jesus said, “YOU do it!” to his disciples. We are his disciples. As his called out ones how can we do anything less?
- We need to move on and finish. An important thing we need to look at here in this lesson from the dinner table is . . .

### **The importance of Grace**

- I’m sure that practically all of us in this room say grace before a meal. I shared with you a month ago how we say grace when we're together as a family and how we ask Fiona and Grady, “Which prayer are we going to say? *God is Great, God is Good*, or do we sing, *Oh the Lord's Been Good to Me?*” And they almost always choose the latter. Our little ones have learned that we do not begin a meal without thanking Jesus for it.

- I can probably count on one hand the number of times in my almost 66 years that I have not said grace before meal. But have I really thought about it? So, let's talk about that, because it's good for us to think about why we are thanking God for our meals.
- Chester writes, "*We need to rediscover the rhythm of saying grace before meals. Perhaps some of us need to discover this for the first time; others may need to refresh what has become a stale habit. What do we express when we say grace?*"
  - *Our daily dependence on God as creatures and sinners*
  - *Our dependence on others as we give thanks for those who grew, processed, bought, and cooked our food.*
  - *The goodness of food, thereby transforming our food from fuel to a gift to be relished.*
  - *Our gratitude to God, thereby reorienting ourselves away from self and back to God.*
  - *Our gratitude for community as we ask God's blessing on our fellowship over the meal."*

What other ones can you think of – I know there are more?

- Here are some other things about the fact that Jesus looked up to heaven and said a blessing over the 5 loaves and two fish in verse 16. Commentator I. H. Marshall says that "Jesus blessed not the loaves but God", and then he shares the Jewish Grace which is, "*Blessed art thou, oh Lord our God, King of the world, who bring us forth bread from the earth.*"
- Chester writes, "*Give us each day our daily bread*". *That is how Jesus teaches us to pray. We need to pray for our daily bread, not because we're worried about where our next meal might come from, but because we're not.*" We're not worried because God is our God.
- That's why saying grace is important.
- And finally . . .

### **We are satisfied when Jesus feeds us**

- It is here in this passage from Luke, but the parallel passages that are in the Gospels of Mark and John are even more explicit, that the feeding of the five thousand reveals Jesus as the supplier of human needs and the giver of bread from heaven. He is the one who gives daily bread. God provided manna for the Children of Israel in the wilderness. And as we pointed out here, Jesus looks up to heaven, and blesses God, and then bread is miraculously supplied. It didn't fall from heaven, instead it was multiplied in the hands of God the Son.
- In other words, as it comes from Jesus, it is enough. With Jesus, we have leftovers. Remember the song we sang when we were in Sunday School  
*Running over,  
Running over,  
My cup's full and running over;  
Since the Lord saved me,  
I'm as happy as can be,  
My cup's full and running over.*

That's the joy of the promise of the Messianic Banquet that we talked about two weeks ago. Since the Lord saved me that's the promise. Jesus invites us to the table and breaks the bread of life and he promises our daily bread.

**Conclusion:** As I finish, let me share two other invitations that we can take to a hungry world – both from Isaiah. Listen,

*On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,  
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.  
And he will swallow up on this mountain  
the covering that is cast over all peoples,  
the veil that is spread over all nations.  
He will swallow up death forever;  
and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces,*

*and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the Lord has spoken.*

*It will be said on that day,*

*“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.*

*This is the Lord; we have waited for him;*

*let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:6-9*

And this:

*“Come, everyone who thirsts,*

*come to the waters;*

*and he who has no money,*

*come, buy and eat!*

*Come, buy wine and milk*

*without money and without price.*

*Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,*

*and your labor for that which does not satisfy?*

*Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,*

*and delight yourselves in rich food. Isaiah 55:1-2*

These meals are free! This isn't an invitation to a meal with a mere 5,000 of his closest friends. These invitations are to a hungry and lost humanity. Let's do as Jesus did, let's welcome them and tell them about the promise of the kingdom of God and invite them to the Messianic banquet table. Amen.