

## Mark 6:30-44 - “Resting With the Lord”

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Our Gospel reading for today, Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand, is the only miracle of Jesus (besides His resurrection) mentioned in all four Gospels. This fact emphasizes its importance. But first let’s consider the context of our text. That’s also important in helping us to appreciate this miracle.

Earlier Jesus had sent His apostles, two by two, into the villages to proclaim the same message that John the Baptist and Jesus had been proclaiming. Basically, they were telling people to “*repent*”—repent of your sins, including your sinful thinking that it’s all up to you. If you don’t repent of your works-righteous ways, you’re not only going to run yourself ragged in this life, but you will remain ragged in the next. Therefore, repent of your sins and “*rejoice*”—rejoice in the Good News that almighty God loves you and all people, and that He’s with us to give us all we need in this life and the next, especially the forgiveness of sins and new, eternal life in Him.

The abundant blessings of God’s presence had become apparent to the twelve apostles after Jesus sent them out into the surrounding villages to share this repent and rejoice message, with nothing but the saddles on their feet, the clothes on their back, and God’s Word on their lips. Not only did God bless their proclamation of His Word in the lives of others, but He provided for the rest of the apostles’ needs through His creation, through the people they met along the way, and especially through the joyful service of thankful believers, as He does for each one of us.

Why, then, do we so often come back to Jesus each week feeling so exhausted, like the 12 apostles in our text who “*had no leisure even to eat*”? Part of the reason may be that we have fallen back into thinking that it’s all up to us. If we don’t do all that God has given us to do for our families and the church, it won’t get done. And since we don’t like to suffer alone with our guilty feelings, we tend to lead others to believe the same thing, guiltily leading them into service.

So Jesus encourages His disciples in our text, and us, to come with Him to a desolate place (a place away from the hustle and bustle of this world, like this sanctuary) and “*rest a while*.” Even though we’re not alone in this desolate place or sanctuary, Jesus is here give us rest by teaching us “*many things*.”

While we’re not told most of what Jesus’ verbally taught that day, His actions teach us volumes. When the disciples asked Jesus to send the others “*away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat*,” Jesus tests their faith. Jesus told them, “*you give them something to eat*.” The disciples’ response was a bit sarcastic. “*Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?*” That would be equivalent to two hundred day’s wages, which I doubt they had on hand.

What Jesus shows them next is amazing. Taking what they did have, five loaves of bread and two fish, which John tells us in his Gospel came from “*a little boy*” (6:9), Jesus told the people to “*sit down in groups on the green grass*,” there by “*the Sea of Galilee*,” (John 6:1). The Greek word for “*sit*” suggests that they would be sitting down or reclining for a meal. This brings to mind what you are doing here today, sitting down as a group in this spiritually green fertile place, by the waters of our Baptism, to be fed physically and spiritually by the Lord. It also brings to mind God’s words from the 23rd Psalm, “*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He lets me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.*”

“*And taking the five loaves and the two fish. [Jesus] looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people...and they all [over 5,000] ate and were satisfied.*” This brings to mind not only the time in the OT when God called Moses and the seventy elders up on Mt. Sinai to eat and drink with Him (Exodus 24:11), but also the Lord’s Supper which He would share with the twelve and most of us here today. Not only does our Lord feed us with His Word, but for those who have grown to understand and believe His Word, He also feeds us with His very body and blood in the Lord’s Supper! Jesus is “*the Bread of Life*” (John 6:35) who satisfies us eternally through the Good News that through His death and resurrection He has delivered us from our sins, death, and all evil.

What does the fish they ate that day remind us of? The sea and some of the creatures in it are sometimes used to symbolize God’s most powerful enemies. Listen to these words from Psalm 74. “*Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters. You broke in pieces the heads of Leviathan and gave him as food for the people in the wilderness*” (vv. 12-14).

Last Sunday I went fishing after the service in hopes of catching some fish for dinner, but caught nothing, like the disciples who went fishing after Jesus’ resurrection. But when Jesus told His disciples to cast their net on the other side of the boat, their net became so full of fish that “*they were not able to haul it in*” (John 21:6). We are obviously not in control of the sea and the creatures in it, but the Lord, who can feed over 5,000 with five loaves and two fish/two creatures from the sea, is in control of all things (including all evil in the world), and can use it for our good.

The “*twelve baskets of broken pieces*” can again remind us of the never ending food that God calls the twelve apostles and pastors today, to distribute—the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, through His Word and Sacraments. These are all wonderful reminders of what our risen Lord continues to do for us today, with or without us.

In conclusion, don’t sweat it! Instead, relax and rest with the Lord who shed His sweat and blood on the cross to give and sustain in us the free gift of eternal life. As a result, we can serve the Lord, not because we have to in order to be saved, or because He is not able to save others without us. Instead, we can “*serve the Lord with gladness*” (Psalm 100), sharing with others the gifts that God has given us (especially the gift of faith) through our words and actions.

Despite our limitations and imperfections, God will multiply His gifts in His timing and ways to accomplish all He wants done, the salvation of His people from “*all nations,*” “*none will be missing*” (Jeremiah 23:4). The Lord emphasized this truth in the very similar feeding of the 4,000. The feeding of the 5,000 was in a Jewish area, while the feeding of the 4,000 was in Gentile territory, making “*disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28:19). All glory be to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[Children’s Sermon]

Have you ever gone fishing with your parents and caught more, or a bigger fish, than your parents? The world calls that beginner’s luck, but we know that there’s no such thing as luck. God is in control of all things for the good of His people. Not only was God humbling your parents, but He was also showing us that despite your age and young abilities, God can use you to do great things, like he used a little boy’s lunch to feed over 5,000 people.

So don’t let some of us grown ups make you feel like you’re not important. Through your presence here today Jesus can do as much or even more good for others than He can through me. That’s because Jesus, who beat the devil, our sins, and death through His death and resurrection, is here today working through all of us to give us and others all we need for our physical and eternal life with Him. [Give them a small water bottle and fish crackers.]