

Mark 6:30-44 & Ephesians 2:11-22
Pentecost 9B (Proper 11B)
July 22, 2018

“MacGyverized”

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

Jesus and His disciples had had a very busy time of it and were eager to get away from it all for few days of peace and quiet ... to reflect on their ministry and lives together. But, when they got to their quiet place of refuge, what did they see? Mark tells us, (Mark 6:34) *“When he went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.”* And Jesus began to teach many things ... He certainly taught the shepherd-less flock gathered before Him, but this was also yet another teaching moment for His disciples ... and for you and me gathered before Him today. Through this situation, Jesus teaches us, the ones who are, as we heard in Ephesians last week, chosen by our Father ... redeemed by our Savior ... and sealed by the Holy Spirit for a purpose. He equips each of us – the chosen, redeemed, and sealed – how to faithfully respond to His call to take care of His sheep ... trusting in His provision.

Popular culture gives us many new terms. Even if we don't watch the newest show or listen to hippest music or subscribe to the latest podcast, terms still sneak into our vocabulary. The TV show “MacGyver” made popular a term I use a lot. “MacGyverize” is a verb which means *“To make or repair an object in an improvised or inventive way, making use of whatever items are at hand.”* Angus MacGyver is a secret agent who manages to find himself in untenable situations with only some scraps and his wits to help him out. Stuck on a cliff with bad guys bearing down ... he quickly fashions a wrecked satellite he's sent to recover and some plastic tarping into a hang glider. Trying to figure out who he can trust while on a runaway train ... he configures a blood pressure pump and an alarm clock into a lie detector machine. Or one of my favorites ...

armed only with the muffler that is dragging off his car, the gear shift knob, some seat stuffing, and a cigarette lighter ... he creates a bazooka to disable the car he's chasing by shooting the knob into the other car's radiator. MacGyver is the kind of guy who doesn't look at his situation and say, "If only I had a (fill in the blank), then I could take care of business." He looks at whatever he has and figures a way to make things happen.

MacGyver is a lot like my late father-in-law, Jerry Tilley. Jerry was a fantastic mechanic who lived in rural Wyoming. When his truck broke down it was never next to his garage. He was always 200 miles from the next garage. It's kind of like that in a lot of Wyoming ... most places are desolate places, far away from anywhere. But Jerry didn't say, "Oh well, guess I'm out of luck." He'd "MacGyverize" his transmission by the side of the road ... or his rear drive axle ... or his brakes ... all with whatever he had handy in the back of his truck.

Jesus wasn't fixing leaky fishing boats or broken vehicles ... as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy, He is the "righteous Branch of David ... fixing broken lives. Through His compassion and teaching, He was bringing salvation to Judah and security to Israel ... shepherdless flocks of sheep. But, in doing so, this flock found themselves in the middle of nowhere ... in a desolate place ... just the kind of place that if Jerry Tilley were around in those days, his donkey cart would've broken an axle dumping loads of grapes, figs, and honey all over the road.

As Jesus continued to preach, the disciples looked out over the huge crowd gathered before them, wondering ... how will they ever feed themselves? So, caring for the welfare of these poor people, they interrupted Jesus to remind Him, "*Jesus, it's late and the people are hungry. Perhaps you can wrap things up so they can find themselves food and shelter for the evening.*"

The thing about sheep is they don't find their own food. The shepherd brings them to their food. So, although the disciples understand the hunger part, they still don't fully understand the shepherd part. So, Jesus leads them on saying, (Mark 6:37) *"You give them something to eat."*

"But Jesus ... do you see how many people are out there? I bet there are way over 5000 when you count the women and children ... it would take almost 200 days wages to buy that much bread. Even then, how would we get it up here!?"

The disciples' reaction must've brought pain to Jesus' heart. I can almost imagine Him thinking, *"These guys ... will they ever get it?! Have they forgotten how I turned mere jugs of water into an endless supply of fine wine at that wedding in Cana? Don't they remember the crazy amount of fish they caught after I told them to drop their nets one more time, even after a night of catching nothing? And what about the demons they cast out and healings they performed in my name just this past month or so?!"* The disciples had a problem. They couldn't see past their own limitations to meet the needs of those Jesus asked them to minister to. They weren't able to see how to "MacGyverize" a solution to the people's hunger ... even though, they had all they needed to do just that. God had equipped them with everything they needed ... they just didn't have eyes of faith and hearts filled with trust in Him to do it.

Do you ever have times when you're like the disciples here? I know I have them. I know God says, *"You feed them."* And so, I look around for the food and don't see any ... or don't see much. I'm guessing you all quite often get that same feeling. I know God gives me my daily bread. And I know this bread is more than ... bread ... it's, as Luther reminds us in the Small Catechism, *"Everything we have that supports the needs of the body ... food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home ... spouse, children, workers ... good government, weather, neighbors, etc."* But, when we look at all we receive from our Father and we look at what we

need for ourselves ... often that doesn't look like it leaves much left over to do what God asks us to do for others. I have to provide for myself and my family first. Then maybe I can find some time to work on getting extras to help others. Once I get enough extra in place ... once I have it all together, then I can do what God asks me to do. So, God asks me to do stuff ... I put Him off until I have all the stuff together ... or until He gets someone else to do it. I simply don't have enough time, stuff, or knowledge to help right now. Sound familiar at all?

Each week, hopefully more often, we pray, as Jesus taught us, **(Matthew 6:11)** *"Give us this day our daily bread."* Perhaps you were able to attend our Sunday Morning Bible Study earlier in the year where we looked at *The Lord's Prayer* in detail. If not, or if you don't remember the discussion that well, the point of *The Lord's Prayer* is not to ask God to give us a bunch of stuff. The point of this prayer is to recognize that God already gives us everything we need to do His will in the world ... AND ... to help us increase our faith and trust in Him to continue providing the gifts we need so that we can lovingly use them to serve His creation in accordance with His will. God our Father doesn't ask us to do anything He hasn't equipped us to do already.

In our gospel today, Jesus knows He's already given the disciples all they need to feed His people. They just don't realize it. So ... the shepherd leads His sheep on a little more, **(Mark 6:38)** *"How many loaves do you have? Go and see."* We don't know the extent of their search, but they scrounge together five loaves of bread and two fish ... hardly the stuff of a meal for such a multitude as they have before them. But Jesus tells everyone to sit down, relax, and wait for the meal to be served. It's not much, but in essence, Jesus "MacGyverizes" a meal for the people with just five loaves and two fish. He blesses it ... He breaks the bread and gives it to the disciples ... so the disciples can feed the people. And the multitude was satisfied. What more!!! There were twelve baskets filled with left overs ... one for each disciple! Jesus equipped His

disciples to do what He asks and provided enough that even they were satisfied. He teaches His sheep to turn to the shepherd ... to trust Him ... and He gives them what they need so that His will is done through them.

Of course, bread and fish, even multiplied by the hand of God, only goes so far. The gigantic crowd was hungry the next day and the next and the next ... only one thing ends hunger. Death.

On the night before He was crucified and died, Jesus fed His disciples once again. Making do with what was at hand, He took simple bread in His hands ... He blessed it ... He broke it ... and He gave it to His disciples to eat saying, **(Matthew 26:26)** *“Take, eat; this is my body.”* Then, after supper He took the cup filled with simple wine ... He blessed it ... He gave it to His disciples saying, **(Matthew 26:27-28)** *“Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”* Simple bread ... simple wine ... Jesus takes these simple things that He has at hand ... He uses them to feed the faith of His sheep ... He uses them to grant them forgiveness of their sins and eternal life. And then, the shepherd Himself was led off to be slaughtered ... like a sheep ... a holy, unblemished lamb. Jesus Christ, fully man and fully God ... like us in all things except for sin ... was sacrificed for us all.

Paul writes to us in Ephesians, **(Ephesians 2:13, 16)** *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ ... (He) reconciles us to God in one body through the cross.”* His sacrifice was perfect and acceptable ... He rose from the dead to defeat the power of sin and death and the devil ... the one who destroys and scatters God’s sheep through his wicked shepherds. In Christ, all those Satan has scattered receive the gift of an invitation to rejoin His flock. Our shepherd, Jesus Christ, leads all of us who believe and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord **(Psalm 23:4, 6)** *“through the valley of the shadow of death ... preparing*

a table before (us) ... (guiding us) to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” He makes us – the chosen, the redeemed, the sealed – His ... He forgives us and makes us holy.

Then, as He leads us on our journey to His house, He calls out to us to have compassion on the sheep that are still scattered in the world. Those who are still far off ... (Ephesians 2:12) *“separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”* Through each of us, the gathered believers of His church, He asks us, *“You feed them.”* God has equipped all of us through our bodies, minds, and possessions for this work. In faith, we turn to Him and trust Him to work through us in whatever task with whatever blessings He gives to us ... feeding the hungry, helping the homeless, loving a person who isn’t like us, patiently teaching a person confused about their true identity as a child of God created by Him, supporting the church and its work through gifts of time, talent, and treasure. We may feel our offerings are too meager to be of any use. But, in the hands of God, He will multiply them to overflowing. We may feel we don’t have sufficient things to be of any use. But, in the hands of God, He will multiply them to overflowing for those in need with enough left over for us too.

God works through each of us – His chosen, redeemed, and sealed – to feed His sheep, (Ephesians 2:21-22) *“Join(ing) together, grow(ing) into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him (we) are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”* There we’ll all live in His presence in the promised new heaven and new earth where St. John reveals to us we (Revelation 7:16) *“shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore.”*

May the Peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

James Kent