

Sermon: *When You Have a Need*
Text: *Matthew 14:13 – 21*
Date: *August 3, 2008 AM*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

Danny came running out of Sunday School like a wild pony. His eyes were darting around trying to find his parents. Finally, he ran and grabbed his daddy by the leg and yelled: “*Man, that story about Moses crossing the Red Sea was great.*” He said: “*The Israelites marched out of Egypt, but Pharaoh chased them. So they came to the Red Sea and the Egyptians kept getting closer and closer. So, Moses got on his cell phone and called in the Air Force and planes dropped a few bomb on the Egyptians. Meanwhile, the Navy built a pontoon bridge and the Israelites crossed over the Red Sea safe and sound.*” Well, by this time, dad was in complete shock. He just said: “*Really? Is that the way it happened?*” And Danny said: “*Well, not exactly, but if I told you the truth, you wouldn’t believe it.*”¹

You know, the Bible is filled with those kinds of stories, stories that sound too good to be true, stories that if we heard them anywhere else, we’d just shake our heads and say, “*Oh really?*”

Today’s text is one of those stories. Jesus stepped out of the boat onto the shores of the Sea of Galilee and a large crowd gathered around Him. And He sat them down and taught them and healed their diseases. Then, late in the day, the disciples came to Jesus and said: “*This is a remote place, and it’s getting late. Send the crowd away, so they can go into the villages and buy themselves something to eat.*” But Jesus told them: “*They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat.*” So the disciples came back with a

little boy's lunch – five barley loaves and two fish and they gave it to Jesus. And the Bible says Jesus took it, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples to feed the multitude. And that day, over 5000 people were fed with five loaves and two fish and when they were all satisfied, the disciples collected 12 baskets of leftovers.

What an awesome, incredible, unbelievable story! This is my favorite story from Jesus' earthly ministry, because it contains some truths that have become the foundation for everything I understand about the church and its ministry in the world. But this morning, as we prepare our hearts and minds for Holy Communion, I want us to take a closer look at this story, because there is something there that God really wants us to see and understand.

1. JESUS CARES ABOUT OUR PHYSICAL NEEDS.

Verse 14 says: "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick." As He looked out over the crowd that day, He saw their needs. He saw the lame and the blind; He saw the weak and the weary! He saw their poverty and their oppression! And later in the day, when it was getting late, Jesus saw their hunger. And He said: "They don't need to go away; you give them something to eat." He saw their physical needs and He cared.

You know, there are lots of hurting people in Jesus today! Some have lost their jobs because of the economic downturn. Some can't but their

medicine and buy their food at the same time. Some are hungry and some are homeless! I met a couple this week that had lost their apartment because he was laid off from work. Even among our church family, there are physical sicknesses and weaknesses. We have physical needs. Some of them are big and some of them are small, but we all have them.

And here's the good news: Jesus knows and He cares! The Bible says: "*Cast all your cares upon Him for He cares for you.*" So ...

I cast all my cares upon you; Lord, I lay all of my burdens down at your feet. And any time I don't know what to do, I will cast all my cares upon you.

Jesus cares about our physical needs.

2. We have needs that are greater than physical needs.

When Mark told the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, he said: "*When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began teaching them many things.*" You see, it wasn't only their physical needs that got Jesus' attention; it was their spiritual needs as well. The Bible says: "*God looks upon the heart.*" He is able to look beyond the surface, the way things look on the outside, the physical, and see the condition of a person's heart. These people weren't just physically hungry; they were spiritually hungry too.

Now, I don't know about you, but I'm hungry this morning. I have a longing in my heart to know Christ, to experience anew His power and His presence in

this place. I'm empty today and I long to be filled with the fullness of Christ. I'm tired and weary today and I long to be refreshed and renewed by His Spirit. I'm a sinner and I earnestly desire to be forgiven. We all have needs this morning, needs that ultimately only God can satisfy.

Fill my cup, Lord. I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul. Bread of Heaven feed me till I want no more! Fill my cup; fill it up and make me whole!²

We have needs that are greater than our physical needs.

3. OUR NEEDS ARE MET IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD!

Verse 19 says: "Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then He gave them to the disciples." And then, verse 20 says: "They all ate and were satisfied."

You know, there is a very interesting connection between this story and the sacrament of Holy Communion. The Gospels use the same formula to describe what happened at the Last Supper ... "Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples."

Something special happens at the Lord's Table, doesn't it? At His Table, we experience God's unconditional love and acceptance. At His Table, we experience God's forgiveness. At this Table, we experience a sense of spiritual fulfillment. Maybe that's what John Wesley meant when he called Holy Communion "a Means of Grace," a channel whereby we receive the love and grace of God.

For surely, just as the multitude was satisfied in the breaking of the bread, so we can discover anew that Jesus satisfies “*the hungry heart with gift of finest wheat. Come, give to us, O saving Lord, the bread of life to eat. Is not the cup we bless and share the blood of Christ outpoured? Do not one cup, one loaf, declare our oneness in the Lord?*”³

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit! Amen!

¹ www.ozsermonillustrations.com

² UMH, pg. 641 – Fill My Cup, Lord by Richard Blanchard

³ UMH, pg. 629 – You Satisfy the Hungry Heart by Omer Westendorf