

Sermon for Sunday, May 3, 2026

John 6:1-15

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Today's worship text is the feeding of the 5,000 from the gospel of John. This miracle story of Jesus is the only one that is told in all four gospels. John includes this story because he uses it as one of the seven signs done by Jesus proving that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

John's gospel tells the story differently than the other gospels. One interesting difference is that a little boy is named as the one who provides the bread and fish to feed the crowd. In the other gospels Jesus asks the disciples what they have and they show him the five loaves and two fish. In those gospels there is no mention of the source or that the source is a child.

Over the years there have been a multitude of arguments about how Jesus managed this miracle. Did the loaf just keep growing and replenishing itself in a miraculous manner? Perhaps. And if you are convinced that this is the way it worked, I'm fine with your belief. I agree that we have a God embodied in Jesus who can do amazing things; a God embodied in Jesus who has the capacity to change the physical world. However, there are others who look at this miraculous sign differently. Some say that the little boy's act of generosity together with Jesus' teachings inspired the crowd to share what they had and that this in-gathering became all that was needed to feed people. Perhaps. In the end I'm not concerned with the factual ways that people use to try and explain this miracle.

The larger point is that Jesus accomplished something miraculous. His words and demeanor and confidence in the provision of God the Father spread into the hearts of the crowd and everyone was fed. Everyone received what they asked for until they were satisfied.

I want to turn your attention now to the little boy. This little boy was only a child, but when the word went out that food was needed he responded with generosity. He didn't worry about whether there would be enough to feed himself. We aren't told if he understood that his five loaves and two fish would NEVER feed 5000 people but that doesn't matter. He gave what he had and trusted that Jesus would use it to benefit other people.

In the larger scheme of this story the little boy's very modest gift was NEEDED. Jesus used that modest offering and miraculously fed thousands.

You know what? You are needed too.

This week has been a trying one with the death of Mitch Lindholm: Geri & Randy Lindholm's son. Mitch was born and raised here in the village and baptized and confirmed as a part of Vasa Congregation. (Baptized March 25, 1984 and Confirmed September 26, 1999) Mitch and his family were currently active members of St. Luke's Lutheran in Goodhue and the funeral will be at St. Luke's on Monday.

However, there are multiple connections with the Vasa community—connections which I will not elaborate. I will tell you that because of those many familial and friend connections many conversations have been occurring all week at events like Tuesday morning coffee and the Endowment team meeting. And that's okay because people needed to process this tragedy. I will go on to say that I have witnessed an outpouring of support from the people of the area—both in Vasa and Goodhue and throughout the countryside in between. The classmates of Mitch's kids spent many hours with them. There was enough food to feed an army both at Jessica's house and at Randy & Geri's house. An enormous box of donuts was delivered to Randy & Geri's, some of which were passed on to the hungry Welch Village ski hill employees. Support that came down to a simple bottle of wine that was gratefully received.

This outpouring of support did not surprise me—I have witnessed it many times as I have been serving as your pastor. Helpful actions are ingrained into this community. These small acts of kindness and support are like the offering of five barley loaves and two fish brought forward by the little boy.

If you agree that the people in the crowd with Jesus shared the little that they had so that there was more than enough for all, then the actions of the people in Vasa and Goodhue and the surrounding area are just like that. They are sharing what they have because they recognize the deep need. Each in their own way, sometimes with a small offering like a bottle of wine, sometimes with a box of donuts, sometimes with enough food to fill the Lindholm kitchen to bursting, each are giving of themselves to fill a need.

As I said earlier, the outpouring of support throughout our communities did not surprise me—I have witnessed it many times during my years serving as your pastor. Here is another example: when I interviewed with the Vasa call committee I learned about the community dinners that were being held here and I wanted to be a part of this effort. If this church called me, I immediately knew I would agree because feeding people was and is important to me. Generosity begets generosity.

As you know the community dinners grew in size and popularity over the years and Vasa never asked any guest for financial support; never put out a collection basket, never cancelled a dinner due to lack of funds. I know that Sue stood near the serving table watching to make sure that the servers never ran out of food. I also know that she wore an apron with pockets and money went into those pockets: money that was deposited into the community dinner account to help pay for the next meal.

The larger point is this: in today's Bible reading Jesus' words changed the hearts and minds of a large group of people. They stopped worrying about their specific needs and started trusting that God would provide for them. It was proven when Jesus fed them. The same thing occurred through the Community Dinner. The Vasa community stopped worrying about the church's specific needs and operated with trust that God would provide--and God did. The Lindholm family didn't ask for this tragedy—but it happened and people stopped worrying about themselves and reached out with compassion to share in carrying the burden of need.

This is what Jesus followers do. The Holy Spirit residing within us moves us to take action. And when people act under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—watch out because it is an amazing thing to witness!

I close today's sermon by emphasizing two verses out of the reading from Philippians: Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God....Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen, and the God of peace will be with you."

"Do not worry about anything, but let your requests be made known to God." God will provide for your needs because God has made a commitment to care for all of God's children. That's a specific promise and it is intended for you.

Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen, and the God of peace will be with you. Continue being who you are: joy-filled and generous and you can be certain that the God of peace will be with you.

A Bible scholar named Dr. Bart Ehrman maintains that the essence of Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5,000 is that he changed the hearts and minds of the many people in the audience. Changed them from being focused solely on the direct benefits for their family to focusing on the needs of the entire group....and with that food was made available for all the hungry sitting there on the grass.