

“The Little Boy’s Lunch”

John 6:1-21

July 26, 2009

I read a very interesting article this week that contained information that I am sure contained information that you have long wondered about and desperately sought answers too. And because we in the church are dedicated to sharing information pertaining to life’s important questions I wanted to share this information with you. Are you ready for this? Listening closely ??? The question that so many have pondered through long sleepless nights How do you train a flea Really If you ever wanted to have a flea circus how do you even get them to stick around. Well, this is your lucky day because here is the answer that I read. The fleas are put into a glass jar. As they try and jump in the jar, they bump their heads on the lid. Over time, they forget they can jump and, for fear of bumping their heads, never go beyond the limits of the jar, even though the lids have been removed. Through continued failure they have become conditioned to confinement. I bet that when you got up this morning and pondered whether or not you would go to worship today you never imagined that you would learn that valuable bit of information right here at First Lutheran.

Well, I don’t know if Jesus and the disciples had trouble with fleas on the grassy hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee or not as thousands of people encircled them hoping to learn from this great teacher or perhaps be healed of an illness or witness some miracle. Thousands of people - 5000 men alone - certainly I can imagine that there were just as many, if not more, women and children All gathered in that quiet place on the hillside just off the sea. Nobody stopped to count the fleas ... Who would bother with anything so insignificant?

We know the story so well. Last week we talked about the setting in Mark’s Gospel. So much had been going on in the lives of Jesus and the disciples. They were exhausted and just wanted to get away to a deserted place to rest. But the people were so desperate for a leader - a shepherd - they followed on foot in hopes of experiencing Jesus in some way. Now - there they were, in a remote area and it was time to eat. ‘Send them all home’ - that was the suggestion from the disciples. But Jesus had other plans. So they had the people - all of them - sit down in the tall grass [among the fleas] And you know the rest of the story A young boy, seemingly the only one with the common sense to bring a bit of a snack along There are now 5 loaves of bread and two fish Divide that by 5000 or 10,000 or 15,000 No matter how you slice it this is going to be a good trick or something really special. Everyone sits down - everyone eats ... Everyone is satisfied 12 baskets full of leftovers!!!

I am not even going to try to explain it. We have heard and considered this miracle story so often that it may seem as though we have considered it from every angle. It is a marvelous story - it is the only miracle reported by all four of the Gospel authors. A great moment of the ministry of Jesus And then I have the audacity to talk about fleas.

Still, I do so with full confidence as I think about this miracle because certainly one

of the thing that we must note in this story is the fact that Jesus works with small things. Seemingly insignificant, unimportant things so often become so critically important in the hands of God. Here it is a little boy's lunch - here it is run of the mill fishermen without any impressive credentials - here it is suffering people from every walk of life who just want to touch the hem of His garment or hear His voice. And in the touch of Jesus' hand everything small and insignificant is transformed. Touched by Jesus this becomes a moment of time which we continue to talk about 2000 years later.

Did you ever notice that that is the way God works? Over and over again we find God taking that which we too often think of as small and insignificant And touched by His power and love, that which we thought to be so insignificant is used in mighty ways. Seriously think about it for a minute God takes dust and forms mankind in His image - God takes water in Baptism and shouts 'I love you - you are a child of the King - God takes a morsel of bread and a sip of wine and comes to us to forgive and assure of eternal life. Jesus clearly had a fascination with all things small and humble. What He talks about are mustard seeds, sparrow, a small lump of yeast, pennies in an offering plate, grains of wheat scattered in fields, children in His arms. Five loaves of bread and two fish [small ones] and thousands who have come with a deep yearning emptiness are satisfied.

And then there are the fleas! It seems silly to mention fleas in the context of the incredible things we see Jesus doing. They are so tiny - insignificant - hardly worth mentioning. In that article I mentioned earlier about the training of fleas, the author went on to make some comparisons to us that I thought were pretty appropriate. The author suggested that too often we think of our selves and our abilities as small and insignificant and we trap ourselves in those ways of thinking just as though we are trapped in a glass jar with the lid on. The article said: "Our self-made limitations sometimes cause us to forget that we can fly. WE RESPOND LIKE THE DISCIPLES, "WE ONLY HAVE FIVE SMALL LOAVES OF BREAD AND TWO FISH. ... We may yearn to use our lives creatively, but our invisible prisons remind us: "You can't do that. It isn't practical. You're not smart enough. It will cost too much. People will laugh at you. You're too young. You're too old. Your health won't allow it. Your parents won't allow it. It will take too long. You don't have the education."

Imagine just five little loaves of bread [more like buns than loaves] and 2 little fish [probably should have been thrown back]. But God uses these and a multitude is feed. Yes, we may have times when we bump our heads and are not able to soar like we should. Maybe there are a thousand different things that we can point as reasons why we should not even try any more. But remember God loves working with the seemingly small stuff - that which we too often label as insignificant. And great things happen.

A pastor was making a home visit to one of the younger families in his parish. A five-year-old boy answered the front door and told the minister his mother would be there shortly. To make some conversation, the minister asked the little guy what he would like to be when he grows up. The boy immediately answered, "I'd like to be possible." "What do you mean by that?" the puzzled minister asked. "Well," the boy replied, "just about every day my mom tells me I'm impossible! - I'd like to be possible" Won't we all? Won't we all love to know that our lives can be used by the hands of God - just as we are no matter how small and insignificant we feel at times.

There are so many glass jars that we experience throughout our lives. They come in

the form of fears, put downs, bullying, hurts, illness, cultural expectations, anger, hate, unfulfilled expectations and dreams. But there is hope for the hopeless and strength for the despairing. There is one who loves to lift us out of fear. Listen to this one speak to you as we sing this hymn together - "You Are Mine - - Hymn # 581.