

"5 Loaves of Bread"

Matthew 14:13-21

July 31, 2005

It was just five loaves of bread and a couple of fish. All four of the gospel accounts include this story of 5000 men [not to count the women and children - who by Jewish law were not permitted to eat with men in public]. Five thousand - and just five loaves of bread. Of course these were not North Dakota farm boys - even so 5000 and only 5 loaves of bread - small barley loaves at that - and they ate and were satisfied. The various gospel authors each add some unique details - John tells us that the food was something a young boy had brought with him. Mark & Luke add that it would cost 8 months wages to buy enough bread for the crowd. Jesus simply told the disciples to have the people sit down and feed them. Five loaves of bread [small loaves] and two fish [probably local fish caught in the Sea of Galilee - little fish - perhaps the size of those Lake Metigoshe perch. And they all ate and were filled. IT'S A MIRACLE!

It is a miracle! We could say that it is impossible and beyond human understanding or we could try to figure it out as we have often tried to do or we could dismiss the story as just more of that religious silliness. We have to do something with it. Too often we just read these stories in the Bible and listen to them as though they are just those familiar church that we do not question - do not try to really understand - we just listen and nod in acceptance because it is one of those old, old stories that we know so well and love to tell.

Five loaves of bread - two fish - 5000 men plus women and children. What do you believe? What do you believe about miracles? What do you believe about God and our world?

Do you believe in miracles? A Princeton Religion Research Center survey found that 82 percentage of adults agree with the statement, "Even today, miracles are performed by the power of God". What do you believe? Do you believe that God is still performing miracles today? I suspect that the vast majority of you would also say yes. But I still wonder what that means - I still wonder what you believe? Do you believe in miracles?

I read about a 6 inch tall ceramic statute that suddenly began to weep tears of blood. Test were run on the blood and it was type O human blood. I don't know exactly what it all means but ... it's a miracle.

Another article talked about a well located in Mexico from which a sick dog drank and was quickly healed. People began coming from all around and drinking water from the well and many were healed. The article said that now between 5000 and

10,000 people come ever day and they reported that about 30 % leave totally healed and another 28% report some improvement in their situation. What do you believe? Is it a miracle?

Pope John Paul II was scheduled to visit a certain hospital back in 1984. The report that I read said that everyone was waiting with a great deal of anticipation. One doctor did not want to miss the Pope but had a lot of paper work to do so he grabbed a handful of paperwork took a seat in a wheelchair to work while he waited. The Pope suddenly swept in, and before the doctor knew what was happening the Pope placed his hand on him and blessed the doctor, who immediately stood up and walked forward. The devout in the Pope's entourage began crossing themselves and looking toward heaven. Was it a miracle?

Then I read about a young girl of 8 years of age who had a brother that was terribly sick. He over heard his parents talking and his father said, "Only a miracle could help him now!" There was a surgical procedure that might help but the family had not money. This young girl, desperate to help, broke open her 'piggy bank' and took the small handful of change - \$1.11 - that she had saved and rushed to the local drug store. Placing the change on the counter she said, "I want to buy a miracle!" The druggist tried to shrug it off saying that you could not buy miracles but the girl was insistent. It happened that the druggist's brother was visiting with him at the store and he happened to be a surgeon by the name of Carlton Armstrong. After some questioning the surgeon asked to be taken to see the girl's brother. Surgery was performed for a total cost of \$1.11 and the young boy recovered. The comment of the mother was, "It's a miracle."

Do you believe in miracles? Is God still at work in our world doing miraculous things? Can 5 loaves of barley bread feed 5000? What is it that you believe? I suspect that each of us might respond differently to the various stories that I have just told you. We all hear the stories - I suspect that we try to use our human reason - saying, "Yes, I believe that is a miracle of God", to one story and shaking our heads in disbelief at others.

I suspect that it is just part of our nature. We try to figure it all out and set our own person set of criteria for determining what we believe to be possible in terms of the miracles of God.

One person can look at the feeding of 5000 in today's gospel text and believe that when the young boy shared his 5 loaves, others began to let go of their personal greed and began to bring their lunch out of the pockets in which they had hidden it and began to share so that a great potluck resulted. Some would say that is no miracle - I think that it is. - - - - Others may look at this Gospel story and imagine angels bring bread down from heaven to supplement the 5 loaves that were present. I have no doubt that the God who created all that exists could do that with His eyes closed. - - - - Many differing statements have been made over the years that have sought to explain how such a thing could happen

- - - and I have to admit that I often find myself trying to figure it all out or posing so possible, logical, human explanation for the many things that I do not and could never understand.

If you asked me if I believe in miracles - I would most likely answer yes. But the real answer is that I believe in God! I believe that God will do what God wants to do. I do not believe that God is bound by the many limits of natural law or human understanding that we normally use to determine the possibility of something happening. I believe in God. And I believe in a God of love. And I believe in a God who calls us to take whatever meager supplies that we have available to us and share them. He gave 5 loaves of bread and two fish to 12 disciples and they shared them with 5000. He gives us gifts and call us to give them to the world too. And miracles happen. I don't understand it - that is for sure. But I believe in God and with God things will happen that we can not understand - some of those things we might call miracles - some of those things may just leave us baffled and confused. But I believe in God! In a hungry world He feeds us. Often time I just don't understand – but I do believe.

AMEN