

August 6, 2017  
Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

“The God Thing”

Matthew 14:13-21

The narrative of Jesus feeding the 5000 is a bit awkward as a pastor approaches creating a sermon. Part of it is that it's such a familiar story that most of us have heard 100 times so it seems difficult to make new and interesting. But what makes it really tough is that this miracle is all about Jesus and who Jesus is. This is Jesus revealing that He is the God of all creation by doing literal creation of bread and fishes, so it's kind of tough to come up with any practical implications for the hearers of the sermon to apply to their individual lives.

If we are to find ourselves somewhere in the message of this story, we'd likely align ourselves with the disciples. After all, we too are disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. So where do the disciples fit in here?

*“Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ But Jesus said, ‘They need not go away; you give them something to eat.’ They said to him, ‘We have only five loaves here and two fish.’”*

Jesus tells the disciples to do the absurd. “You give them something to eat.” And this is one of those rarer instances when the disciples don't act foolishly and Peter doesn't say anything brash and stupid. They say, “We only have a little bread and fish.” They admit they're powerless to do anything. Then they stand back and let Jesus do the God thing. And perhaps this is a good point to ponder in the feeding of the 5,000.

The disciples had a pretty good idea to get this crowd fed; send them home. It made perfect sense. It took care of the immediate problem.

Jesus had a better plan; a God plan. It made no earthly sense, and earthly people could never pull it off. The disciples admitted they could do nothing, and Jesus did the God thing and the crowd was blessed with not only a meal, but with a miracle of God. And I'm betting that, although at the time they didn't really get who Jesus was, after His death and resurrection when the Word of the Gospel was proclaimed, many of these believed and were saved.

The Father has a better plan for humanity. He sends the Son into humanity to live a perfect life in humanity's place, die under His wrath in humanity's place, then rise to perfect and everlasting life as the firstfruits of all humanity who would follow in faith. He sends apostles to proclaim His Gospel Word through which humanity is called to and sustained in this faith. Great plan of God to bless humanity.

This gift of faith calls us to Jesus; calls us to stand back and let Jesus do this God thing. But do we?

Of course in our sins we mess this up. Every time we sin we break the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods,” by making ourselves an authority above God in breaking His law, stepping outside His perfect design for creation and doing the sin we please. We trump the will of the God of creation with our own will and stand in the way of God doing His God thing with us.

Stop that. Repent. Recognize that God's good and perfect law is just that; good and perfect—a God thing. Lament your disobedience and run to Jesus, the God/man who did the God thing to forgive those sins and be forgiven.

But beyond that, fully realize what this God thing Jesus has done for you and to you means! We hold onto guilty about our past failures, beat ourselves up about the woulda, shoulda, couldas, in life where we've failed God, failed ourselves and failed those we love. That's kind of denying the God thing.

God baptized you and washed yours sins away. Why do you hold onto them? In baptism, He has killed that old sinful man or woman on His cross that a new man or woman might emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Why do we keep the old person hanging around rather than striving after the new? Trust that baptism! That's Jesus doing the God thing!

Influenced by our culture at large, I wonder if believers aren't jumping past the idea of God doing the God thing way too quickly and right into man doing the man thing. I mean, just think about what's going on in the realm of having babies; the creating of life. Are we doing man's plans of contraception, invitro fertilization, abortion, and coming on the scene soon—designing our babies through DNA manipulation—are we even considering God anymore?

And lest you think the culture don't get to you, the last time you saw a family with five or six or seven children, did you think the parents had to be nuts? The Psalm sayeth: *"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!"* Do you think you know better?

And let's not forget that subject the Bible rarely mentions: wealth. Oh wait, the Bible says a lot about that, about giving of your firstfruits to God and managing the wealth with which God entrusts you to His glory and the benefit of those around you. When payday and budget planning happens, whose plan is paramount? Are we looking for the God thing to happen, or going with the man thing and all the "must haves" our culture dictates?

And especially in your tragedies and hardships, whatever they may be, are you desperately searching for a way for you to save your life? Are you thinking things are so bad that God can't possibly be in control? God's Word is loaded with instances of God using the bad of fallen creation to bring about His plan of salvation; most notably the innocent suffering and death of His Son for you. Stand aside, and know Jesus has done and is doing the God thing for you.

I admit, I'm casting a rather large net here. But I think it's warranted because God is God in every aspect of life. Jesus died and rose to redeem all of your being, not just a religious fraction that manifests itself on Sunday mornings. His is a grand salvation encompassing your entire body and soul for all eternity. You have been called to a faith that is on board with this plan 24/7 unto death to everlasting life. Stand back and let Jesus do the God thing...all the time!

I mean, can you imagine any disciple in the middle of the 5000 stopping Jesus and saying, "I've got a better idea." Can you see any of the disciples saying to the risen Christ, "I think I could have come up with a better way of getting this done"? Would you call any early church Father "faithful" if they were to say, "God intended the free forgiveness of sins, but I've got a new and improved road to righteousness"?

No. Like Jesus perfect God-plan to feed 5000 hungry people on a hillside, God's plan is always best. You know at the perfect time the Father sent the perfect Son to execute His perfect plans to bring your sins to nothing and make you perfect not just in eternity, but each and every day you walk this earth as His baptized child. Get with the plan. Consider what you do, all you do, and be sure it's according to His design. His is a good plan. Stand back and let Jesus be doing the God thing in you. Amen.