

February 27, 2011 John 6:1-21 Feeding of the 5,000

Enough is enough! Moving from fear to faith

Have you ever said the phrase “enough is enough”?

Usually means you’ve had enough of someone’s behavior and it better stop – phrase I used this weekend while David was gone in Florida for a training event – I could have been talking about the snow – “enough is enough” – or I could have been talking about C & J bugging each other – “enough is enough”.

Yet, in John 6, when you think of the word “enough” – it means something else entirely

The feeding of the 5,000 (which actually would include many more since not all were actually counted) is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. There must be some reason for it, even if each gospel takes a slightly different perspective.

Bread and water—these two stories in John 6 are about bread and water – feeding of 5,000 and Jesus walking on water – are not only about what Jesus does, but about what he says.

The people followed Jesus that day b/c they had seen the signs that he had done and when he’s w/his disciples and looks up – he sees the crowds and asks how they are going to find bread for all of the people. “Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little,” answers Phillip.

And then we have the famous story of the little boy with five barley loaves and two fish and suddenly, after everyone sits down in the grass and Jesus gives thanks, the food is distributed so that the people receive as much as they wanted, and even then, Jesus tells the disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” There was more than enough to share.

It has been said about this story that the miracle could have been that Jesus moved people to share what they had. They no longer worried about the dietary laws that they had to follow, worrying about eating food that someone else may had, and people brought out what they had with them to share and it was more than enough.

In order for that to happen, Jesus had to take something away – he took away their fear. And the people were hungry and Christ provided more than just bread, he provided hope. What are you hungry for? Their hunger was for more than bread – it was a real hunger, a hunger for Christ – yet a hunger that they did not completely understand

Afterwards, the people wanted to take him and make him king

The assumption that a prophet should be king is surprising b/c roles usually separated Jesus, not earthly political figure; not earthly definition of a king

His power wasn’t from the people, but from God

The people knew there was something about him – that’s why they followed him – and when they experienced a miraculous sign, they wanted more of him, but that is not the role Jesus was to take, so he withdrew again.

It was about more than bread, which brings us to the water – walking on the sea
When it comes to the walking on water scene, John’s gospel takes away some of the “wow”
factor. The gospel of John doesn’t include Peter walking on water or Jesus calming the storm.
With all of these parts missing in John’s gospel, maybe once again the focus is on other things.

When Jesus was walking on the water, John focuses on what he says – “It is I; do not be afraid.”
I am Good News

In both signs – Jesus takes away their fear:
In the bread incident, Jesus took away the fear and people shared what they had – more than
enough so that there were leftovers from this super-sized meal

When Jesus walks on water, he takes away fear and replaces it with hope – hope, not in
miraculous signs, but hope in the good news of a generous God, a God who sends his Son, Jesus
Christ, to bring saving grace to all people

The story of the feeding of the 5,000 is a story of generous giving – a God who gives us all –
hope and life

The story of Jesus walking on water is a story of generous giving – a God who gives us
Christ, the good news, so that we do not have to be afraid

In these signs he gives us bread and water (Jesus’ body and blood – the signs of a generous God)

Are we open to share what we have, knowing that God is the one who brings the good news?
Are we open to share what we have, believing that God will provide?

For we have a God who instead of saying to us, “enough is enough,” says “I have more than
enough for you.”

Helpful resources:

Narrative Lectionary podcast

John Jewell sermon on John 6

Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel, Craig R. Koester