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~ Matthew 14:13-21 ~

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There Is Enough: God's Abundance in our World

When we hear the story of the feeding of the five thousand, our attention is often drawn to the miracle itself. Five loaves of bread and two fish become enough to feed a crowd of thousands. It is a powerful story of God's abundance. But before the miracle happens, there is something equally important taking place. Jesus sees the crowd. He notices their needs. He sees their hunger, their exhaustion, and their vulnerability. Matthew tells us that Jesus had compassion for them. The miracle begins not with bread, but with compassion.

That detail matters because compassion changes the way we look at people. The world often teaches us to move quickly past those who are struggling. We become accustomed to statistics, headlines, and social problems. Yet Jesus never sees people as problems to be solved. He sees human beings created in the image of God. He sees people who matter. He sees people worthy of dignity, care, and love.

As we approach July 30, the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, this Gospel invites us to think about those who are often unseen in our society. Human trafficking exists because vulnerable people are treated as commodities rather than God's family. Around the world and here in Canada, men, women, and children are exploited through forced labor, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse. Many are isolated, afraid, and unable to seek help. Some are newcomers searching for opportunities. Some are youth looking for acceptance. Some are people living in poverty who have few options. Their vulnerability becomes an opportunity for others to profit from their suffering.

The disciples look at the crowd and come to a practical conclusion. They tell Jesus to send the people away. It seems reasonable. The day is ending, the place is remote, and there is not enough food. The disciples see limitations. They see scarcity. They see a problem that appears too large to solve. Jesus responds with words that challenge every generation of believers: "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

Those words are not only about food. They are about responsibility. In today's time, our responsibility. You and me. In the passage we see Jesus refuses to dismiss the crowd. He refuses to send away those who are vulnerable. He invites his disciples to become part of God's answer. The disciples know they do not have enough. Five loaves and two fish seem insignificant compared to the need before them. Yet Jesus asks them to offer what they have.

That is often how God works. We look at the problems of our world and feel overwhelmed. Human trafficking is a complex issue. Poverty is a complex issue. Loneliness, injustice, and exploitation can feel far beyond our ability to address. We may think that our contribution is too small to matter. Yet Jesus does not ask the disciples to solve the entire problem. He asks them to bring what they have. He takes their small offering, blesses it, and uses it in ways they could never imagine.

The Church is called to do the same. We may not have all the answers, but we can create communities where people are seen and valued. We can welcome newcomers. We can support those who are vulnerable. We can learn about the realities of trafficking and exploitation. We can advocate for justice. We can offer friendship, hospitality, and practical assistance. What seems small in our hands can become something much greater when placed in God's hands.

I have seen this happen in our own Spanish-speaking ministry. Many people come to Canada carrying hope for a better future, but they also arrive with uncertainty. Some do not know the language. Some do not understand how systems work, and example is the credit system. Some are looking for employment, housing, or simply a place where they belong. These circumstances can make people vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. At our church, we cannot solve every problem, but we can offer welcome. We can help people find information, connect with resources, practice English, build friendships, and discover a community that cares about them. What may seem like a small act—a conversation after worship, a shared meal, an introduction to someone who can help—can become a reminder that they are not alone. It is one way that God takes what little we have and uses it to bless others.

I have watched newcomers arrive knowing almost no one in the city. Months later, they have friends, support, and a church family. That transformation does not happen because we have great resources. It happens because people share what they have, and God multiplies it. And although I can see the physical transformation, they seem happier and with hope

We may never fully know the impact of the compassion we show.

At the end of this particular Bible passage, everyone is fed. Not only that, but there are twelve baskets left over. Matthew wants us to see that God's abundance is greater than human scarcity. The disciples saw only what was lacking. Jesus revealed what was possible. In God's kingdom, there is enough grace, enough mercy, enough compassion, and enough hope. The resources may not always appear sufficient to us, but God's love is never exhausted.

This Gospel reminds us that the miracle begins when we refuse to look away from those in need. Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion. As his followers, we are called to see what he sees. We are called to recognize the dignity of every person, especially those who are vulnerable and overlooked. And we are called to trust that when we offer what we have in service to our neighbors, God can do far more than we could ever accomplish on our own.

May we be people who refuse to send others away. May we be people who see, who care, who welcome, and who share. And may we trust that the God who fed the multitude is still at work today, transforming small acts of compassion into signs of God's abundant kingdom. *Amen.*