

## 10 Pentecost B

2 Kings 4:42-44

Psalm 145:10-18

Ephesians 3:14-21

John 6:1-21

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### ***Water, boats and bread; summer sightings of Jesus.***

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

What do you get when you take a few fish, a loaf of bread, and whole lot of hungry people? Or a boat on a stormy sea? Well, if it has anything to do with Jesus, you've got a miracle on your hands. At least that's how this story is often viewed.

Aren't miracles great? They get our creative juices flowing! Imagine a crowd of thousands, an earnest young child with a benevolent heart and a loving God who provides for all with a simple prayer and a deep faith! Imagine the relief after being on a stormy sea, nearly meeting your maker, but instead being inexplicably rescued and brought to safety!

We hunger for stories like this. We hope for such miraculous rescues from the storms in our own lives. However, perhaps this story has more ordinary elements to it than it does miraculous. Looking again we see we have a rather *ordinary* situation, hungry people, where Jesus feeds them *ordinary* fish and bread – mere peasant food just to fill the stomach. Hmmm, what is a miracle then?

Perhaps then the real miracle here is not in the actions of Jesus at all but elsewhere, like in the boy who, like all children in the gospels, is open to the presence of Jesus. Into Jesus' hands he entrusts his meager lunch. As I said this was ordinary food; barley bread was the cheapest available, often thought of as fit for animals not people. And the fish? It was likely pickled or

dried to preserve it. Hardly a feast worth sharing but, it is what the boy hands over.

His small and innocent action helps us to understand why Jesus sets children before us as models. Like in Matthew 18:4 where Jesus welcomes children saying: *Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* He used children as models because, they are more trusting and open minded, they don't worry about where tomorrow's bread is coming from or who paid for it, but only that hungry people might eat. Sometimes we might see children as bundles of unbridled energy or innocence, interesting then that Jesus said we should be like them. Sharing, taking notice of the needs of others, recognizing that what we have belongs to all – that's how one small lunch became enough for all, that's how the whole world may have enough.

Biblical scholars across the centuries have wondered about this story – questioning whether it really did happen, and if it did what are the mechanics of such multiplication. One idea goes to say that most of the people probably had brought food but, were afraid to let it be known or else they would have to share it with the hungry crowd. But when that little lad came forward his generosity shamed their selfishness and they began to share with one another. Once the spirit of sharing and caring took over, it turned out there was enough to spare. In fact, there were 12 baskets left over. We learn that when we confidently place the little we have in the hands of Jesus, there is more than enough. Good news for our unbalanced world.

No matter how meager or awkward or challenging or gloomy our circumstances, with God, no situation is hopeless. That was a key thing that John wanted to assure the early church and it is a key teaching for us.

The second part affirms this. After a long day, lots to learn, they are out in a boat when the sea gets rough. The “sea” in biblical

times was often a metaphor used to describe difficulty, challenges, hardship, even evil. Remembering that John's gospel is written 70 or so years after Jesus died, we know that this was a tumultuous time for followers of The Way. John is sending a message to those struggling trailblazers of faith – you are not alone. They are bonded together as the church (also often represented by a boat) one people of God, relying on one another and God in their hearts. How encouraging!

Is the miracle here Jesus walking on water and calming a storm 2000 years ago? Or could it be something more ordinary that that? Could it be that we are living the miracle in our own time as we continue to live together in faith, supporting one another, coming together for prayer, for justice, for praise?

And as we gather we continue to be fed by common, everyday things, water for baptism, wine and bread filling us with the life of Christ. We are together in the boat riding the days of calm or storm – and we are never alone.

I've been watching for "Jesus" this summer, not waiting for a free lunch or tempting fate on a river rafting trip, but let me tell you a couple ordinary examples I've taken in.

One was being at Mulhurst Lutheran Bible Camp for a few days. I've been there many times, it's comfortable and familiar, but every time I go I catch a glimpse of God. We did some paintings together with the families that were there – and there was Christ as I watched these families working together in the laughter, color and mess!

We took a short trip to the mountains – again something we've done many, many times. But every time I am awed by the mountains, by the vast lakes, trees and wildlife. I can't help but think there is a master artist at work!

And Jesus in emails. Yes, emails as I read through the plans and preparations undertaken to welcome one of the refugee families to Edmonton. To see people from our congregation being the “hands and feet of Christ,” as we so often say, is inspiring. Jesus is in the regular moments of life making them miraculous.

John teaches us to see differently. Let's not wait for Christ to come in a flash of light or theatrical performance, but let's open our eyes to see the regular and ordinary miracles we live within every day. When we learn to see this way, then it doesn't matter if we are sharing a picnic with some KFC, sharing bread at the Table, it doesn't matter if we're facing challenges or feel like things are going haywire. We will look around and see the many ways Jesus has already provided for us and is already among us and we might just be inspired to take off our sandals knowing we are on holy ground.

Amen.

