

**“Tell Me A Story: About Hunger”**  
**Preached By Tim Moon**  
**St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church**  
**August 3, 2014**

The world around him is starting to close in. The Roman and Jewish authorities are threatened by the way of Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus knows this better than anyone. This morning, John the Baptist's disciples came to him to tell him the bad news. John had been killed, beheaded by Herod. His cousin, his friend, beheaded. His family, his partner in ministry, killed. As Jesus so often did, he goes into the wilderness to pray, and I can only assume, to grieve. This would be a natural response for many of us, wouldn't it? The need to be in God's presence when we are hurting, asking for guidance and strength, yearning for love when we feel empty. Sometimes being alone in this way helps us gain perspective, or recharge, or forces us to feel. To be. It's a time to process, to catch our breath. We need this. Jesus needed this. But even in the moments when we need to stop, take pause, regroup, the world around us keeps on moving. We are forced to be present. Forced to listen to our children. Show up at work. Be a partner to our spouses. Put food on the table. We have to continue to give even when it feels we have nothing to give. Jesus is no different in this story. However, he not only gives out of survival but out of love. He not only feeds himself and the disciples but feeds everyone. In a physical way, but also in an emotional and spiritual way---despite his own recent loss.

Jesus first escapes on a boat to the Sea of Galilee, heading for a quiet spot where he can get his bearings. But he has become too well known in this area to sneak away in anonymity. And the Sea of Galilee is a bit too small to hide away. Katie and I were fortunate enough to visit Israel last year, and to call the waters of Galilee a sea is extremely generous. At a tenth of the size of Lake Pontchartrain, it is more accurately a lake, if not the Pond of Galilee. On a clear day, locals would have easily seen Jesus rowing about the lake. And as he made his way across the waters, I imagine people starting to point at Jesus on the water: “There's Jesus! Let's go tell everyone we know

and then follow him.” And before you know it, a crowd of 5000 men, with their wives and children are just following Jesus’ every move. They are a herd, following their shepherd, but the shepherd just needed a bit of “alone time.” If I were in Jesus’ shoes, I could just see the crowd building, shuffling about the shoreline. I might even row back and forth just to watch them shuffle back and forth. My impulse would be to find a way to lose them so I could be alone. But this is a small place, and Jesus has little option to get away. It reminds me of growing up in a small town in North Alabama. Even though I moved away over a decade ago, it is impossible to go into Walmart or the Piggly Wiggly, without running into gobs of people I know. And so if I’m not feeling social, I just avoid Walmart. But what does Jesus do? He recognizes that now is not the time to get away. While he does eventually sneak away for alone time after this story, he knows that now he has other priorities. He has a calling. So he rows to the shore, and he shows compassion on the masses because they were calling for him.

David Lose suggests that there are multiple miracles in this story, and 2 of them are often overshadowed by the feeding. The first miracle in this story very well may be that Jesus leaned in to this situation when it was so tempting to withdraw. In this scene, Jesus creates an example of what he hopes for his disciples, and for each of his followers, to engage the world with compassion, even when it hurts. This story drips with hunger and heartbreak. Jesus hurts for his cousin, the disciples fear that there is not enough provision, and the people are sick and hungry. And with 5000 people, come 5000 stories, 5000 lives, 5000 loved ones. Rachel Held Evans imagines who must have been at the feeding of the masses and writes “**Within this legendary story hides more than 5,000 others – the story of the skinny orphan, the skeptical tax collector, the despised Samaritan, the curious fisherman, the struggling widow, the disdained prostitute, the wealthy mother, the angry zealot, the ostracized Canaanite, the banished leper, the suffering slave, the repentant sinner....and ultimately, the story of you and me.**”<sup>1</sup>

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Similarly, the walls of the church are not filled with those who've got it all together. It is filled with hurting people, hoping to help people. So as Jesus continues to heal and show compassion the day turns to evening. This impromptu meeting in the wilderness gives way to the practicalities of everyday life. Stomachs start to grumble. And the disciples become concerned about how these people are going to eat. "We are in the middle of nowhere, there are thousands of people, and I hear the murmurs of hunger weaving through the crowd. Jesus, let's send them to the villages, a.k.a let's make this someone else's problem. Or at the very least, let's problem solve a practical solution.

But the way of Christ values compassion and generosity over practicality. And what does Jesus say "They do not need to go away. YOU give them something to eat." The emphasis being that the disciples were part of the solution. The disciples must have thought Jesus had lost it. Jesus, we are in the wilderness, it's getting late, and we have 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. I mean Thomas could eat that himself. It's like try to feed a Jazz Fest crowd with a bit of French bread and a couple of crawfish pies. It just doesn't make sense. What will WE eat if we give our food away? And this is the second miracle, Jesus emphasizes that the disciples are to actively participate in fulfilling this hunger. So Jesus takes the meager rations and creates a bountiful feast. I can just imagine the disciples' amazement as the food just keeps coming, and the crowd's awe as they eat, and eat, and eat a bit more. And here, EVERYONE eats. Everyone is indiscriminately fed. In this moment, eating together, the people's needs are met in the most unlikely of places, in the most unlikely of ways.

Again if you place this story in context, it comes on the heels of the story of the beheading of John the Baptist. A story that takes place in the midst of a grand feast by the king Herod. It appears that Matthew is making a comparison between the kingdoms of earth and the kingdom of God. In one, excess is the norm, wealth is amassed on the backs of the helpless, and violence is a means to maintain

power. In the other, compassion reigns, equality is encouraged, and power is found in solidarity. I can't help but think that not much has changed today. Now, we see exploitation of the hardworking, violence, immigrants with nowhere to go, and hunger within some of the most developed cities in the world, not to mention those cities undeveloped. And this is where Jesus calls us, his church, to show a different kingdom, a different way. This is where hurting people hoping to help people come together to be a beacon of light in the darkness. We are called to feed hungry people, as well as help them feed themselves. We are called to love everyone indiscriminately. We are called to see the value in all people, regardless of race, gender, orientation, which side of a national border they reside on, economic or social potential, or political leanings. We are called to give to others when some may be intent on taking away. We are called to see others as people, with names, and families, and stories of their own, who are all children of God. Because when it comes down to it, we are all hungry in our own way, and we all need each other. So when we, the church are faced with meeting the needs of others, what will we do? Set barriers or lean in. Pretend that the hungers of the 5000 don't exist, or bring our 5 loaves and 2 fish, trusting that when the beloved community works together, wondrous things will happen.

I think that's one of the beauties of community. At University Baptist Church in Waco, TX, we would have semi-annual Love-Feasts. This was just a hip, clever way of saying we were having a pot-luck dinner. And the only description was "bring something you love to eat." With a few hundred college students, and a small number of adults, I always worried that we would run out of food. I mean if you think about it, each family brings 1 dish, and college students may or may not bring anything. From a planning standpoint, it's a risky endeavor. Without fail, we always had more than enough to eat. Granted we usually had about 75% desserts, but we ate until we were full. That's the power of the pot-luck isn't it? We know that to be true at this church as well. When everyone chips in, everyone leaves fulfilled.

Because when a group of people collect canned goods in July, a hungry family has access to good food. When churches across the city of New Orleans decide to participate in a Crop Hunger Walk, they raise money and awareness for global hunger. They lean into the situation with compassion saying “If we work together, more people can be fulfilled.” When we make our time and our gifts available to a fellow church member, a friend, a neighbor. When we lean into the lives and needs of others, we actively participate in the kingdom of God.

St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church, may we be a people who lean in to the hungers of this world, bringing our 5 loaves and 2 fish, and trusting that God will use it to feed everyone who hungers.

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and then follow him.” And before you know it, a crowd of 5000 men, with their wives and children are just following Jesus’ every move. They are a herd, following their shepherd, but the shepherd just needed a bit of “alone time.” If I were in Jesus’ shoes, I could just see the crowd building, shuffling about the shoreline. I might even row back and forth just to watch them shuffle back and forth. My impulse would be to find a way to lose them so I could be alone. But this is a small place, and Jesus has little option to get away. It reminds me of growing up in a small town in North Alabama. Even though I moved away over a decade ago, it is impossible to go into Walmart or the Piggly Wiggly, without running into gobs of people I know. And so if I’m not feeling social, I just avoid Walmart. But what does Jesus do? He recognizes that now is not the time to get away. While he does eventually sneak away for alone time after this story, he knows that now he has other priorities. He has a calling. So he rows to the shore, and he shows compassion on the masses because they were calling for him.

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**“Tell Me A Story: About Hunger”**  
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**August 3, 2014**

The world around him is starting to close in. The Roman and Jewish authorities are threatened by the way of Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus knows this better than anyone. This morning, John the Baptist's disciples came to him to tell him the bad news. John had been killed, beheaded by Herod. His cousin, his friend, beheaded. His family, his partner in ministry, killed. As Jesus so often did, he goes into the wilderness to pray, and I can only assume, to grieve. This would be a natural response for many of us, wouldn't it? The need to be in God's presence when we are hurting, asking for guidance and strength, yearning for love when we feel empty. Sometimes being alone in this way helps us gain perspective, or recharge, or forces us to feel. To be. It's a time to process, to catch our breath. We need this. Jesus needed this. But even in the moments when we need to stop, take pause, regroup, the world around us keeps on moving. We are forced to be present. Forced to listen to our children. Show up at work. Be a partner to our spouses. Put food on the table. We have to continue to give even when it feels we have nothing to give. Jesus is no different in this story. However, he not only gives out of survival but out of love. He not only feeds himself and the disciples but feeds everyone. In a physical way, but also in an emotional and spiritual way---despite his own recent loss.

Jesus first escapes on a boat to the Sea of Galilee, heading for a quiet spot where he can get his bearings. But he has become too well known in this area to sneak away in anonymity. And the Sea of Galilee is a bit too small to hide away. Katie and I were fortunate enough to visit Israel last year, and to call the waters of Galilee a sea is extremely generous. At a tenth of the size of Lake Pontchartrain, it is more accurately a lake, if not the Pond of Galilee. On a clear day, locals would have easily seen Jesus rowing about the lake. And as he made his way across the waters, I imagine people starting to point at Jesus on the water: “There's Jesus! Let's go tell everyone we know

and then follow him.” And before you know it, a crowd of 5000 men, with their wives and children are just following Jesus’ every move. They are a herd, following their shepherd, but the shepherd just needed a bit of “alone time.” If I were in Jesus’ shoes, I could just see the crowd building, shuffling about the shoreline. I might even row back and forth just to watch them shuffle back and forth. My impulse would be to find a way to lose them so I could be alone. But this is a small place, and Jesus has little option to get away. It reminds me of growing up in a small town in North Alabama. Even though I moved away over a decade ago, it is impossible to go into Walmart or the Piggly Wiggly, without running into gobs of people I know. And so if I’m not feeling social, I just avoid Walmart. But what does Jesus do? He recognizes that now is not the time to get away. While he does eventually sneak away for alone time after this story, he knows that now he has other priorities. He has a calling. So he rows to the shore, and he shows compassion on the masses because they were calling for him.

David Lose suggests that there are multiple miracles in this story, and 2 of them are often overshadowed by the feeding. The first miracle in this story very well may be that Jesus leaned in to this situation when it was so tempting to withdraw. In this scene, Jesus creates an example of what he hopes for his disciples, and for each of his followers, to engage the world with compassion, even when it hurts. This story drips with hunger and heartbreak. Jesus hurts for his cousin, the disciples fear that there is not enough provision, and the people are sick and hungry. And with 5000 people, come 5000 stories, 5000 lives, 5000 loved ones. Rachel Held Evans imagines who must have been at the feeding of the masses and writes **“Within this legendary story hides more than 5,000 others – the story of the skinny orphan, the skeptical tax collector, the despised Samaritan, the curious fisherman, the struggling widow, the disdained prostitute, the wealthy mother, the angry zealot, the ostracized Canaanite, the banished leper, the suffering slave, the repentant sinner....and ultimately, the story of you and me.”**<sup>1</sup>

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David Lose suggests that there are multiple miracles in this story, and 2 of them are often overshadowed by the feeding. The first miracle in this story very well may be that Jesus leaned in to this situation when it was so tempting to withdraw. In this scene, Jesus creates an example of what he hopes for his disciples, and for each of his followers, to engage the world with compassion, even when it hurts. This story drips with hunger and heartbreak. Jesus hurts for his cousin, the disciples fear that there is not enough provision, and the people are sick and hungry. And with 5000 people, come 5000 stories, 5000 lives, 5000 loved ones. Rachel Held Evans imagines who must have been at the feeding of the masses and writes “**Within this legendary story hides more than 5,000 others – the story of the skinny orphan, the skeptical tax collector, the despised Samaritan, the curious fisherman, the struggling widow, the disdained prostitute, the wealthy mother, the angry zealot, the ostracized Canaanite, the banished leper, the suffering slave, the repentant sinner....and ultimately, the story of you and me.**”<sup>1</sup>

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But the way of Christ values compassion and generosity over practicality. And what does Jesus say "They do not need to go away. YOU give them something to eat." The emphasis being that the disciples were part of the solution. The disciples must have thought Jesus had lost it. Jesus, we are in the wilderness, it's getting late, and we have 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. I mean Thomas could eat that himself. It's like try to feed a Jazz Fest crowd with a bit of French bread and a couple of crawfish pies. It just doesn't make sense. What will WE eat if we give our food away? And this is the second miracle, Jesus emphasizes that the disciples are to actively participate in fulfilling this hunger. So Jesus takes the meager rations and creates a bountiful feast. I can just imagine the disciples' amazement as the food just keeps coming, and the crowd's awe as they eat, and eat, and eat a bit more. And here, EVERYONE eats. Everyone is indiscriminately fed. In this moment, eating together, the people's needs are met in the most unlikely of places, in the most unlikely of ways.

Again if you place this story in context, it comes on the heels of the story of the beheading of John the Baptist. A story that takes place in the midst of a grand feast by the king Herod. It appears that Matthew is making a comparison between the kingdoms of earth and the kingdom of God. In one, excess is the norm, wealth is amassed on the backs of the helpless, and violence is a means to maintain

power. In the other, compassion reigns, equality is encouraged, and power is found in solidarity. I can't help but think that not much has changed today. Now, we see exploitation of the hardworking, violence, immigrants with nowhere to go, and hunger within some of the most developed cities in the world, not to mention those cities undeveloped. And this is where Jesus calls us, his church, to show a different kingdom, a different way. This is where hurting people hoping to help people come together to be a beacon of light in the darkness. We are called to feed hungry people, as well as help them feed themselves. We are called to love everyone indiscriminately. We are called to see the value in all people, regardless of race, gender, orientation, which side of a national border they reside on, economic or social potential, or political leanings. We are called to give to others when some may be intent on taking away. We are called to see others as people, with names, and families, and stories of their own, who are all children of God. Because when it comes down to it, we are all hungry in our own way, and we all need each other. So when we, the church are faced with meeting the needs of others, what will we do? Set barriers or lean in. Pretend that the hungers of the 5000 don't exist, or bring our 5 loaves and 2 fish, trusting that when the beloved community works together, wondrous things will happen.

I think that's one of the beauties of community. At University Baptist Church in Waco, TX, we would have semi-annual Love-Feasts. This was just a hip, clever way of saying we were having a pot-luck dinner. And the only description was "bring something you love to eat." With a few hundred college students, and a small number of adults, I always worried that we would run out of food. I mean if you think about it, each family brings 1 dish, and college students may or may not bring anything. From a planning standpoint, it's a risky endeavor. Without fail, we always had more than enough to eat. Granted we usually had about 75% desserts, but we ate until we were full. That's the power of the pot-luck isn't it? We know that to be true at this church as well. When everyone chips in, everyone leaves fulfilled.

Because when a group of people collect canned goods in July, a hungry family has access to good food. When churches across the city of New Orleans decide to participate in a Crop Hunger Walk, they raise money and awareness for global hunger. They lean into the situation with compassion saying “If we work together, more people can be fulfilled.” When we make our time and our gifts available to a fellow church member, a friend, a neighbor. When we lean into the lives and needs of others, we actively participate in the kingdom of God.

St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church, may we be a people who lean in to the hungers of this world, bringing our 5 loaves and 2 fish, and trusting that God will use it to feed everyone who hungers.

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