

McCabe United Methodist Church

The Idols We Love: A Holy Tug-of-War
Lent 2017, Sermon and Worship Series

“Boy with Loaves & Fish” Monologue

Sermon on John 6:1-13 (3-15-17)

Jack Mitchell

I don't usually speak in front of so many adults, so please forgive me if I seem a little nervous. It's just that this story I want to tell you is too good to keep to myself!¹

The story I'd like to tell you is about the day I met Jesus.

Well, I didn't actually get to meet him myself – but I did get to hear him speak. And I met one of his closest disciples. And I even got to help him out in a pretty amazing way!

I hope you don't mind if I tell you this story.

My father works as a well-digger, so he is away from our home lots of the time. He works hard to support us, but we are still quite poor.

That's partly because my mother is sick a lot. She has difficulty taking care of things around the house and, since my father is away so often, I do a lot of things mothers usually do.

I help take care of my younger brothers and sisters. I also go to the market every couple of days to get the food we need.

Sometimes I only go once a week and we have to make do with whatever I can buy us. Every once in a while, the food I get doesn't last quite long enough and our stomachs grumble or we beg from a friend or relative.

¹ Many thanks to Jack Mitchell, whose ideas about what the boy in this story might have been feeling helped give shape to this “message in monologue.” Jack also presented the monologue in worship, and I'm extremely grateful to him for that as well! — Pastor Jenny Hallenbeck Orr

When that happens, father gets a little angry with me. He thinks I could try harder to get the baker to give us one more loaf of bread... or to get another fish or two from the man who sells fish.

That's the one bad thing about having to go to the market; since I am just a boy, the sellers don't take me very seriously.

They know me and they know my family. They know my father works hard and they know that my mother is sick. But I don't think they care. They often roll their eyes at me and tell me to go away when I beg them to give me something extra.

I hate it when our food runs out and my father gets angry.

But that is not what I wanted to tell you about! Like I said, I want to tell you about the day I met Jesus. Well, the day I saw Jesus...

My father was gone, working in another town, and my mother was at home sick. My brothers and sisters were at home and I went to the market like usual to get some bread and fish. It was one of those days where there was not as much money as father hoped to give me, so I knew the food I bought had to last quite a few days.

Five loaves of barley bread and two fish. That was what our money got me that day. I probably would have tried harder to get a little more out of the sellers, but it was very busy at the market.

Our little town doesn't have that many people in it, but the market was pretty crowded that day. When I started heading home, I began to notice that many of the adults were talking about a man named Jesus who was just outside of town. They said he was a miracle-worker!

He had turned water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana. He had healed a sick boy and he had given a blind man his sight. That's what people were saying about Jesus as I listened in the market. But, honestly, I didn't believe them. I didn't believe in miracles.

For a long time, we had been praying a miracle would heal my mother, and no miracle ever happened. I didn't believe what all those people were saying about Jesus... but everyone seemed pretty excited and I was curious.

I looked around and noticed many people begin to walk in a certain direction out of the market. They were walking toward the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee. I wasn't supposed to go anywhere except to the market and back home, but I couldn't help myself!

So, I turned and followed the people who were heading to the shoreline.

I walked quickly because everyone just seemed so excited to go hear Jesus. But, the closer I got to the sea's shoreline, the more crowded it was. There were so many people – and I was so much smaller than most of them. I got kind of scared.

I worried that I had made a mistake and I started to turn around to go home. But the crowd was so big. It was *so big*. When I turned around, I stopped for a minute because I saw that the crowd behind me was just as big as the crowd in front of me.

I pulled our basket of food in closer to me. I didn't want to lose it.

I started to walk through the crowd back toward the market, but I didn't get very far. The people kept coming from all directions and they were all moving away from where I wanted to go. It was hopeless. I was never going to get home in that crowd. So, I just turned back around and moved toward the shoreline again.

Eventually, the crowd stopped moving, but it seemed like a long time before that happened. And it seemed like a long time since I'd left home to go to the market. I looked up at the sun and I could tell it was close to meal time. My mother would be wondering where I was. Right then, I felt my stomach grumble.

I looked around at all the people near me. I couldn't see anyone else with any food. I started to get nervous. I looked around for a way through the crowd to get back into town and home. Just then, I felt someone gently grab my shoulder.

At first I was scared, but I turned around and saw a younger man with kind eyes. He looked at me and said, "My name is Andrew. My brother and my friends and I are here with Jesus. Jesus wants to feed the crowd, but none of us have any food." We both looked down at my basket. I pulled the bread and fish closer into me.

Andrew then knelt down so he could look right at me with those kind eyes. He asked, "Is that your family's food?"

I told him it was and that my mother was home sick and that my father was out working and that it was all we'd have to eat for several days.

He stood up, put his hand on my shoulder, and said, "Come with me." He seemed so kind – and I had heard the people in the marketplace say such incredible things about Jesus. So, I followed him toward the front of the crowd.

Andrew told me to wait near the bottom of the hill and he walked up to talk to someone. I think it was Jesus. Andrew pointed down to me and Jesus looked toward me, looked at my five loaves of barley bread, my two fish... and then he looked at me.

I will remember this forever because, when Jesus looked at me, I knew everything would be all right. I knew I would make it back home. I knew my mother and father wouldn't be angry with me. I knew we would have enough food. And I even knew my mother's sickness would get better.

Jesus looked at me and I knew all of these things.

And then he smiled and nodded his head toward me.

Andrew came back down the hill and I gave him my basket of food. As Andrew walked away from me and back up toward Jesus, I heard some people near me start to laugh. “Hey, kid!” I heard someone say. “Do you really think your bites of bread and your teeny fish will feed all of us?” They laughed some more.

But then Jesus and his friends started motioning for all of us to sit down. And everyone did! The whole, huge crowd sat down. I watched as Jesus then lifted one of the loaves of bread up toward heaven before he began passing it to the people.

There were only *five* loaves of bread and *two* fish. I can't explain it, but it was like whenever someone took a piece, suddenly there was more for the next person.

It took quite a while before everyone got something to eat, but we all did. We all got more than enough. It was amazing! It really *was* a miracle!

The crowd was so excited about what Jesus had done that, suddenly, a bunch of people stood up and started moving toward Jesus, calling out to him loudly as they got closer. But, before the group got too close, Jesus seemed to disappear and his friends were left behind.

I looked at his friends and Andrew saw me watching them. He motioned for me to join them... so I walked up the hill. As I got closer, I noticed 12 baskets of bread pieces. Where had all of that come from? I looked at Andrew again and he said, “These are your leftovers, my friend.”

“But it's so much more than I had in the first place!” I exclaimed. “That's Jesus for you,” Andrew replied. “Can we help you take these home? The twelve of us can't eat all of this bread.”

And so, they helped me get through the crowd as we walked back into town and to my home. When we walked in, my father was there looking worried and angry. But then his face changed when he saw all of Jesus' friends with their baskets of bread.

“It's all for us, father,” I said. “It's from a man named Jesus.”

“He makes miracles happen. He turned my five loaves of barley bread and two fish into enough food to feed a huge crowd!”

Jesus' friends set down the baskets of bread. Andrew looked at my father and said, “Your son is very brave and very generous.” Father looked stunned as they turned and walked out our door.

He looked at all the bread. He looked at me. Then he looked up – like he was looking to heaven – and I saw him mouth the words, “Thank you.”