

Cornerstone Community Church

March 9, 2014

Good morning! It's a pleasure to be with you today. I've seen many of you in the hallways or the kitchen here at church and it's nice to be with you in worship this morning. Habitat thanks you for your generosity in letting us have office space in your church. I have worked in the Lutheran Church as a youth director for nearly 15 years and I love having an office in a church. These are good spaces. There's good work done here that's supported by the Good Word of Christ.

I've come to know your congregation more over the last several months and I'm impressed by the mission centeredness of your congregation and your people. You show witness to Christ through the mission trips you do – with your upcoming trip to the Dominican Republic.

And I also see mission in more simple, every day ways. As a former youth director I am all too familiar with the sounds of kids in the youth room. One day I was in our Habitat office downstairs and I heard screaming, cheering and yelling coming from upstairs. Then it would become really quiet. Then another outburst of commotion. I happened to have had an extra platter of sandwiches in my office from a meeting earlier that day so I thought I'd arm myself with sandwiches

before heading upstairs to find out what this noise was all about. I walked into the youth room and found Greg with some kids after school playing video games. I offered them sandwiches – which were gone in seconds – and enjoyed the fellowship and mission that was happening. Because you know – there’s more than just video games happening there – it’s ministry. It’s relational ministry. It’s hanging out – it’s entering in to the lives of young people to show the light of Christ. Greg knows, as does this congregation, that you build a relationship among God’s people so that you can show them the relationship you have with Jesus – and that your relationship with Jesus matters in your life.

Habitat for Humanity believes that our relationship with Jesus matters in our lives. That’s why we do the work of building homes with people in need. Habitat for Humanity was born in the 70’s in Americus, Georgia. Millard and Linda Fuller, the founders of Habitat – had a Christian conviction that everyone deserved a simple, decent and affordable place to live. As Christians, it was unacceptable to see the living conditions of their neighbors. That same spirit is alive in the Habitat mission today. In Fuller’s book, The Theology of the Hammer, he says, “ ‘the theology of the hammer’ is that our Christian faith mandates that we do more than just talk about faith and sing about love. We must put faith and love into action to make them real, to

make them come alive for people.” In other words – God tells us to do something. Christ compels us to act.

This is taught to us in the familiar Bible story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. This is one of few stories that are told in all four gospels of the Bible. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – they each found this story important enough to include in their writings. Other familiar Bible stories - Jesus and the Samaritan woman – only in John’s gospel; Jesus quieting the storm – it made three of the gospels but not John’s; and Jesus walking on water didn’t make Luke’s gospel. What is so important about the Feeding of the 5,000 that made it the cut in all four gospels?

You know the story.... Jesus had been traveling, from town to town, teaching. In two of the gospels, Matthew and Mark, this story comes right after the news that John the Baptist had been beheaded. Jesus had to have been weary. He had to have been distraught at this news. He did what he always did at these times– he went to a quiet place to pray. But the people wouldn’t leave him alone. They followed him. As evening approached the disciples became worried. These people are not going to have anything to eat, they thought. Perhaps they were thinking – WE are not going to have anything to eat. Jesus – you have to send them away. Tell them to go fend for themselves and

get something to eat. But Jesus says, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

I love the directness of this scripture. Jesus says, “YOU” – you give them something to eat. Figure it out. Confused, the disciples said, What? But we’ve only got five loaves of bread and two fish – that’s not nearly enough for the 5,000 people who are here. That’s impossible! This task you put before us is impossible and it simply can’t be done.

Now at this point you couldn’t blame Jesus if he were totally fed up with his disciples. He’d been traveling and teaching with them for months at this point and yet they still didn’t get it. PRAY. TRUST. BELIEVE. These were concepts that the disciples found hard to get. We’re not that much different, are we?

So, once again, Jesus found a teachable moment. Jesus simply said, “Bring them here to me.” Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish – looked to the heavens, gave thanks and broke the loaves.”

Jesus took what was before him and blessed it. I heard one preacher, TD Jakes, talk about this story in this way. In this act, Jesus is blessing something that is not enough. He is giving thanks for something that is not enough. Until we can be thankful for something that is not enough - then what we have cannot be multiplied into what is more than enough. He goes on to say, We are certain he had two fish and five loaves of bread when he blessed it. It’s when he broke it –

that's where we lose count. The blessing is in the breaking. It is the breaking of life that produces the blessings of life."

This story that we've heard since we were children becomes packed with meaning, doesn't it? We live in a society that doesn't promote the idea of being thankful for that which is not enough. We live in a society where we don't even know what enough is. We always want more, more, more. Jesus says to us here, pause. Look at what God has placed before you and be thankful. And you know the end of this story – all 5,000 had their fill and there were baskets leftover!

And what is this notion that the blessing is in the breaking? It is the breaking of life that produces the blessings of life. No one wants to go through brokenness in our lives. But, no one escapes it. Everyone has gone through, or is going through, a broken time of their lives.

Maybe our careers haven't turned out as we had hoped. Maybe our marriage fell apart. Maybe we've got addictions that we can't bare to tell anyone about. Maybe we've lost a child. Maybe we struggle with depression or mental illness.

Look at it. Look at your brokenness. Look at what is "not enough" in your lives and pause, raise your hands to the heavens and give thanks. Give thanks for what you do have before you – as meager as it is – give thanks for it. Bring your thanks and your brokenness before God and see how he can multiply your blessings.

At Habitat, before every build, we feel like the disciples as they stood before the crowd of 5,000. We think, God, this is impossible. The task before us is too large. We are supposed to raise \$85,000 per house, gather unskilled volunteers and build a house with unpredictable weather. This is crazy. But – Thank God we believe it is YOU and not WE that makes it happen. We've got about half the finances we need and we put it before you. We put our unskilled but eager volunteers before you. We bring all that we have before you and we give you thanks and we ask for your blessing.

We are people in need. Not just our Partner Families who have had their share of brokenness – but our volunteers and donors as well. We are all in need of your blessings. God, in this Lenten season, let us pause and bring all that we have to you and give you thanks. AMEN.