



**July 25, 2021, Worship Sermon**  
**" The Multiplication of the Loaves "**  
Delivered by Rev. Stephen Keiser

***2 Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145:10-18; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21***

Sixteen months ago, when the first set of lock downs were imposed after the pandemic, there was a real concern among many of us that there would not be enough food to go around. Do you remember going into the grocery stores in late March and early April and seeing rows of empty shelves? We know now that those empty shelves were not because there was insufficient food. There was plenty of food. It's just that people were hoarding. It didn't help that our leaders were encouraging us to stock up, just in case we had to quarantine and couldn't get to the grocery store for a few weeks. Eventually, though, a miracle happened. People began to share the abundance that they had. They shared with food cabinets and other programs that provide food to hungry people. Our church received a \$5000 check from the synod to support our food cabinet, plus thousands of dollars in unsolicited contributions from generous neighbors who wanted to make sure no one would go hungry. The Upper Darby Community Outreach Corporation received tens of thousands of dollars for its hot meal program. People shared with us because they see us distributing food every Friday morning at the Fresh for All. What happened here in this church was replicated in churches and mosques and temples across the country. And gradually, people started to realize that there would be enough food to go around; and as they realized this, they became even more generous and shared from their abundance. We still have people sending us checks and bringing us food for our food programs. Yesterday on our parking lot, Kendrick Mickens, the Harrises, and some folks from the Delaware County Community College gave away beautiful organic produce and frozen sandwiches from Wawa. Over a hundred people in our neighborhood received a blessing because people were willing to share. There is no reason for anyone to go hungry.

The story of Jesus feeding the 5000 is one of the few stories that is in all four of the Gospels. The fact that it is in all of the Gospels underscores how important it is. And there are so many ways to approach it. This story tells us something about the God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. God is able to multiply the loaves and the fishes to feed all of humanity. The miraculous feeding of the multitude isn't just something that happened 2000 years ago. God repeats this miracle every day. Every day, God takes light from the sun, and water from the rain, and carbon dioxide from the air and mixes them all together in plants in the process scientists call photosynthesis. And God takes the sugars and the fats and the proteins from plants and uses them to feed, not just 5,000, but 5,000,000,000 people around the world, plus all the other living creatures. Psalm 145 says, "You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living creature." God's open hand is a stunning miracle of fruitfulness and creativity.

The story of Jesus feeding the 5000 also tells us something about the nature of sharing. Some Biblical scholars believe that the miracle in this story isn't Jesus multiplying the loaves. The miracle could be Jesus using the generosity of that little boy, who shared his five loaves and two fish, in order to encourage other people to be generous. Maybe, there were lots of people with food in that crowd of 5000 people, but they were afraid to share because they were worried there wouldn't

be enough to go around. Perhaps it was kind of like what happened last year as people were hoarding toilet paper. But when that little boy shared his lunch with Jesus and his disciples, and they shared this food with others in the crowd, gradually everyone started sharing and there was plenty of food to go around.

Our congregation, like many other churches around the world, has the vocation to be like that little boy. In a world where people hoard because they are worried there isn't enough to go around, our faith in the God who is able to multiply the loaves and the fishes frees us to be generous with what God has given us. We can share, because we know that God produces more than enough. And as we share, other people are encouraged to share. God's open hand becomes visible before our very eyes, and we see God satisfying the desires of every living creature.

We are sad that the Upper Darby Community Outreach Corporation had to cease operations and end the evening meal program. But new opportunities for sharing are opening up. Denise MacAllister is hoping to organize a weekday evening food cabinet and Reggie Johnson is tapping into new programs with Philabundance to supplement the Friday morning Fresh for All. These are new opportunities to prevent hunger and to reveal God's generosity... new opportunities to assure an anxious world that there is enough to go around.

In a few minutes, Jesus will once again host a meal for us, a meal in which he gives us his own life for food. Let the bread that we are about to share be the five loaves that started the whole miraculous feeding of the multitude. Here at this table, God opens God's hand and shares with us so we can in turn share with each other.