

**ARE YOU SATISFIED**  
**John 6:1-15**

**Thanksgiving Eve Service**  
**November 21, 2012**  
**Pastor Nathan J. Thompson**

I am reminded this evening of the story of the pastor who was preaching a sermon on this John 6 text where Jesus feeds the five-thousand. Trying to really make his point he raised his voice and proclaimed emphatically, “Jesus took 5,000 loaves of bread and 2000 fish, and he fed 5 people.

Then he asked, “Now can you do that?” Following this question the pastor noticed a young woman who was nodding her head saying yes. After the service the pastor asked this woman—“How come you said “yes” you could do what Jesus did?”

Well the woman explained to him his error and how he had said 5,000 loaves and 2,000 fish, and how anyone could feed five people with that amount of food.

The next Sunday the embarrassed pastor tried to correct his mistake: “Jesus took five loaves of bread and two fish, and he fed 5,000 people. Now can you do that?” Again this young woman nodded yes with her head.

After the service the pastor asked her, “How can you say that you could do what Jesus did?” “Oh,” said the woman, “I would simply use the leftovers from last Sunday.”

In our Bible reading from John 6 we see how Jesus sailed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in order to get away from the crowds. And yet no sooner had he landed on shore, and had climbed up on a large hill overlooking the lake, the people began to arrive in a steady stream by the thousands.

As nightfall approached it became clear to Jesus and the disciples that all these people were hungry and tired. Jesus asked the disciples what they thought they should do—there were mobs of people, they are hungry and there is no food.

In Matthew, Mark and Luke’s accounts of this story the disciples response is to say that nothing can be done so all the people should be sent away. *“Let them buy their own food, Jesus, send them away. Night is coming soon, Jesus, send them away.”*

If you recall this response of the disciples is not new. Remember when the little children came to Jesus the disciples were grumbling in the background. *“Jesus, send them away. Send them away.”*

When the blind man along the roadside cried out to Jesus for help the disciples whispered in his ear, *“Jesus, send him away.”* When it was a tax collector, or a woman in the street, or a Samaritan, or someone who was sick the response was always the same, *“Jesus, send them away.”*

Have you noticed how little we have changed in 2012 years? So often today we respond in a similar way. When confronted by people in need our response is often, “Send them away.” We are so busy at this time of the year send them away.

To those who are homeless, or suffering from addictions, or who are different from us the message is the same, “Send them away.” Even in the church, a church who follows Jesus Christ and his teachings we are often quick to respond with the words, “Send them away.”

However as we study the Gospel writings we discover that Jesus never uses these words. Instead he says that if anyone wants to come to him let that person come and do not stop them. If anyone is hungry, or thirsty, or rejected, or sick Jesus says he will never reject them. The picture of Jesus is one of always welcoming us all—never sending people away.

Back to the story. The disciple Andrew has discovered a small boy in the crowd who has brought with him five small barley loaves of bread and two small fish. Now this, of course, was not exactly a banquet.

In fact, barley loaves were often throwaway items used primarily by the very poor or even fed to animals. And the fish was most likely the size of sardines—pickled of course to preserve them. No, this was not the first lutefisk dinner. This was most likely the little boy’s bag lunch.

Jesus however takes this bread and fish, gives thanks for the wonderful gift of life and food, breaks them into pieces and puts them into baskets, and tells the disciples to distribute the food to the crowd. Somehow miraculously there is enough for everyone—everyone is given enough to eat. Absolutely amazing! No wonder all four Gospel writers include this story.

When everyone has finished eating Matthew, Mark and Luke make a statement that really says it all. They write that when all have eaten, all the people are satisfied. Five thousand plus people have been filled and they are all satisfied.

Now what is suggested here, of course, is much more than just physical satisfaction—it is spiritual satisfaction as well. The people were fed by Jesus and were completely satisfied—body, mind and spirit.

How rarely today this takes place among us that we are truly satisfied. How often are we satisfied? No matter how much we have or how much we have been given it seems as if most of us want a little more—or maybe a lot more. As we enter this holiday season what do you think will satisfy us?

I heard the story of a little girl who learned one day that her mother had just given birth to a new baby brother. The little girl was rather restrained in her enthusiasm. In fact, she was downright apathetic.

When she went to nursery school her teacher asked her, “Aren’t you happy and excited to have a new baby brother?” “Well I guess so,” she replied, “but there are certainly a lot of things around here we needed more.”

Perhaps that is our mindset today. When we hear about the love and blessings of Jesus we say to ourselves, “How nice—but there are so many things that we need even more.” What we feel we really need is something more tangible—some kind of promotion; some kind of raise in pay; some kind of new relationship. Oh Jesus is nice, don’t get me wrong, but we need all these other things to be truly satisfied.

This is why we are to gather with Jesus on the hillside each week in worship, to receive the kind of food that really satisfies. This is the promise of Jesus of course—that he gives us life, food, hope and joy—that he provides us with far more than we could ever expect. He provides us with a satisfaction that can never be taken from us. And for that we are to truly be thankful.

A final dimension to this story is that when all the 5,000 plus people have eaten, when everyone is satisfied, there are still twelve baskets of food leftover. Jesus says to disciples, *“Gather up the leftover food so that nothing may be wasted.”*

And so on this Thanksgiving Eve we are challenged with a most serious question. What do we do with the leftovers? What do we do with all the overflow in our existence. Of course that means we must first be clear on exactly when we are satisfied and feel we have enough.

Large numbers of people insist that there are no leftovers, even some who are very wealthy. They believe that everything is to be consumed, to be invested, to be saved for retirement, to be used so we don’t pay taxes—it is never enough.

Yet when we are truly satisfied in Jesus then we are always challenged by the leftovers. In the Old Testament, when the Israelites picked up the manna in the wilderness and when they took more than they really needed, it spoiled. The leftovers spoiled.

What do we do with the leftovers? Jesus told the disciples to gather all the leftovers so that nothing would be wasted. If we have leftover time, what do we do? If we have leftover food, where does it go? If we have leftover money, where do we put it? Once we have taken what we need, what do we do with the rest?

I read an article onetime that stated that many in the church today are barely giving the leftovers as offerings. Many do not want to make any sacrifices or really commit to the church financially—they simply want to tip God and keep all the rest for themselves.

Yet in the same realm they want excellent preaching, more worship options, great music, excellent youth and education programs, a well cared for building. We all, my friends, have far more than we ever need. Are we using the rest to further Christ’s work? Are we giving our leftovers and beyond?

Remember this Thanksgiving the story of the feeding of the 5,000. It is an amazing miracle—especially that everyone was satisfied. Wouldn’t it be a miracle if each one of us would be able to say as we leave our service this evening—we have been filled and are satisfied.

It is my sincere hope and prayer this Thanksgiving that you will be truly fed by Jesus Christ; that you will be truly satisfied; and that you will remember to share your abundant blessings with others. A blessed Thanksgiving to you!