

**July 25, 2021**

**John 6: 1-21**

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What does it mean to have so many resources that you can do whatever you want? Really. Whatever you want. I don't know about you, but I thought about that this week, watching Jeff Bezos zoom skyward for those 3 minutes of weightlessness.

Don't get me wrong--space exploration is exciting, I agree. You couldn't help cheering for Wally Funk, finally allowed to blast off, and I'm part of the generation that was ushered into the school gym to watch every Apollo lift-off and splashdown. But 6 billion dollars for not quite 10 minutes? To hear Bezos talk before and after the flight and hear the number of times he said "I" left plenty of people wondering how someone could possibly be so tone-deaf in a world where millions are hungry, millions remain unable to obtain a Covid vaccine, and his own workers describe bone-wearying conditions.

In any case, if you've got it; flaunt it, seems to be the theme, and it sounds like we all will be watching the billionaires' space race for some time. What *does* it mean to have so much?

A whole lot of people and not a lot of food in today's Gospel, the first of many that we'll hear this summer about bread, food, hunger, and Jesus. The Feeding of the 5,000 is included in all four Gospels--Matthew, Mark, Luke, and here in John. Something about this particular miracle made it so memorable that it was told by those who were there and then retold again and again until it was finally written down in scripture. Why do you think of all the events in Jesus' ministry, this one afternoon on a hillside became so important? Maybe because these people knew something about what it was like to never have quite enough.

"The Passover was near," John writes. This isn't just an interesting factoid, but a phrase meant to make us think: of bread--unleavened bread, because there was no time to wait for it to rise--of manna, the bread God provided for years in the wilderness as the people wandered; and of deliverance--how God's mighty hand and outstretched arm led those in bondage out of Egypt and into a new life. This

large crowd coming toward Jesus had all of that spinning around in their heads and hearts.

How to feed such a group? Despite everything the disciples have seen and heard so far--healings, water turned to wine, promises of living water and God's love poured out on the whole world--despite all of it, Philip and Andrew just say what everyone is thinking: "We don't have bread for everyone" and "What are five loaves and two fish?" They knew too well what it meant to never quite have enough.

Do you wonder if that conviction lives in us as well--that somehow there's never going to be enough and that the world is a place of scarcity? Many of us are taught early on to share the blessings that God has given us, but the results throughout our lives are mixed, if we are honest. We don't mind giving to those who are poor or hungry or unsheltered--mostly, unless it seems to us that they aren't doing enough to help themselves. We do like to share--as long as we have enough for ourselves, too.

We worry about "those people"--whoever they are for us-- "those people" wanting too much justice or too much change because it might take away something from us, some status or right that is *ours* and needs to be protected. You don't have to be a billionaire to use the word "I" too much, do you?

When we are convinced of scarcity this narrows our vision, keeps us from loving our neighbor, and as is so glaringly obvious this summer, keeps us from taking care of this world that God made and entrusted to us.

"What is this among so many?" Andrew says to Jesus. But blessed, broken, and given, there is abundance--enough for everyone with baskets and baskets of leftovers. No one is left out and nothing is lost. It is a miracle, but it is also a sign in John's Gospel for the disciples and for us: in Jesus, with Jesus, God's grace and love are set loose in the world and there is always enough. Jesus invites us to trust in that abundance, to trust that the goodness of God can provide all that we need: food for our bodies and food for the hunger in our hearts.

How do we know? Because in this Eucharistic meal, we receive the abundance of Jesus' love and grace again and again. Here Jesus is present, giving himself to us and to the world completely, with those words said again and again "for you...for you."

Last Sunday was the first time in 16 months that we actually were able to serve Communion to you all, coming forward to receive the bread and wine. Christ is present everytime and everywhere this meal is celebrated, of course--so those little individual cups with wafer and juice, receiving Communion in our living rooms--certainly a sign of his love and the abundant ways Jesus can come to us. But there was something so moving about giving and receiving this meal again, together. Each of us, not *just* 'I' but 'We,' given this meal.

Trusting in Jesus' abundant love, might we learn again how to share? Might we trust that caring for the needs of others will not somehow diminish our lives? Might we find, as Paul writes today, that we can know "what is the breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God."