

-For those of you who are married or are/have been in a long term relationship with someone, there always is the stigma of meeting your partner's' family for the first time. I'm sure many of you have stories of your first encounter with the "inlaws". I definitely remember on one of my first trips out to the Bay Area to visit Pam and Fred witnessing a new way of cooking. You see, I grew up in a family where my mom did most of the cooking. Dinner was at 6pm sharp every evening and even on busy evenings my mom would amazingly (I still don't know how she did it) have dinner ready and on the table for us boys to quickly down and move on to other activities. My mom, Cindy, is quite the planner. She would have a schedule of meals in week long increments posted to the inside of our kitchen pantry. This was my experience when it came to most meals when I first landed at Pam and Fred's home. I remember the first night when it got to be about 7pm (well past dinner time at the Huseth's) and Pam finally asking the question: well, what should we eat for dinner? (You mean you DON'T have a plan on what we are going to eat tonight?) To which Fred gets up, looks and rummages around in the fridge and says: "Well, these potatoes are about to go bad, so let's use them up!" "I'm going to go out to the garden and see what there is", responded Abby. Thus, everyone proceeded to go in-and-out dropping some ingredients here adding some others there. Fred had to take some time out and do some of the potatoes over because he burned the first batch. Pretty soon, we all sit down to this meal around 9pm that is a melange of potatoes, eggs, and garden produce. I was absolutely ravenous. "THIS is how this family eats?", I wondered.

-Our gospel story today is a little bit like Fred's cooking, a melange of two stories pasted together. Jesus' miracles of Feeding the Five Thousand and walking on water are taken out and we are left a little bit with the two ends. Despite the oddness of how these two sections are thrown together, there remain some interesting tidbits. One, I think, starts in in verse 31 which reads: "Jesus said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. Notice this time around it doesn't say "they didn't have anything to eat", but they had *no time* to eat.

-This sounds like a description of a modern young American family rather than an ancient text. There was a recent article in the Atlantic magazine that described the changing habits and time usage of the American family. The American family is busier with chores and work than ever before right? Actually, no. Ashley Campbell in her piece "Are Americans are busier than Ever?" documents multiple studies which show that the average American on the surface is working less hours statistically than they were in the 1960's and even 1980's. Due to an increase in maintenance plans and home warranties, we are doing less housework than we used to do as well. So it's all good right? Plenty of free time? Campbell says "not so fast". While these work hour curves

seem like they are going down, the author documents two fundamental shifts in family life and structure happening in the United States. The first is the rise in economic disparity between families. Sure the amount of work hours for the *average* family has decreased, but the amount of work hours for single mothers has tripled. With education debt loads of especially younger families on the rise, couples are taking on more and more paid responsibilities outside of their main jobs which, a lot of which are not accounted for in these studies. While it is true that wealthier families are working less and have “more free time”, many other single-parent, families of color, and mixed families are being left out and feeling the pinch that their dollar is not going as far. The second point Campbell brings up in relation to time and families in the recent addition of this (hold up smartphone). Families are more connected to the internet and outside world, but in being so connected are also more distracted than ever. Campbell writes “But maybe knowing that there are 10 great TV shows you should watch, nine important books to read, eight karde skills your child hasn't mastered, seven ways you're exercising wrong, six ways you haven't sufficiently taken advantage of the city, etc., fosters a kind of metastasized paradox of choice, a perma-FOMO (fear of missing out).” In short, a growing number of families are seeing their economic prosperity statistically decline which requires more work to make up and all of us face a growing amount of distractions that take us away from our meals together. So where does the church fall into this? Maybe it has to do with Fred's cooking after all.

-You know what was so amazing about Soren's baptism? Yes, the river and ritual was amazing, but what happened afterwards? People brought food to share, laid it out on a table and we ate together. Eating together is who we are as a church. It is fundamental to Jesus' ministry. But I ask: When it comes down to it, what is the miracle that Jesus does in the Feeding of the Five Thousand story? Yes, he creates more food and they have leftovers. But he also creates time. Time to sit on the green grass and eat together. Time to share and be present for one another. What if the feeding of the five thousand was more about the feeding of these people with time than it was with food? We always joke about the “holiness” of the church potluck, but I want to argue that this act is exactly what Jesus is calling the church to do. To bring food (maybe even our leftovers) to share so that everyone has enough: both in their bellies and in their soul. Can we see ourselves as ministers of time just as we commonly see ourselves as ministers of food? What would that mean?

-I already told you that the lectionary skips some major stories here. One of the stories which is left out before our text this morning is when the disciples get into a boat and intend to sail to Bethsaida. Jesus is left behind with the crowds and a big storm comes up thrashing the boat around. Jesus famously walks on water to meet the disciples and gets into the boat with them. Then our text this morning picks up where it says in verse 53: “When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the

boat." Wait a minute, I thought they were going to Bethsaida. Gennesaret is almost due west while Bethsaida is due south. This is a very different place than this storm pushed them to. Even with Jesus, they got pushed off course to place they didn't intend to be. Yet here's the thing: "When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed." Maybe this was the right place to be after all. Maybe it doesn't matter where or who we share a meal with or even that the meal is burnt a little bit. Maybe it is more about time than place.

-My prayer for all of us gathered here is that we might be blown off course a little bit. And wherever we land, may we have the courage to not only share our food, but our time in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.