

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 9/29/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

Yesterday's "Through the New Testament" reading from Matthew 14 about JESUS feeding more than five thousand people got me thinking about the story in a different way than I recall previously. This is the only one of JESUS' miracles that is recounted by all four gospel writers. And it is actually John that tells that the two fish and five loaves came from a boy who offered them. That was likely his lunch for the day, but he gave it to the disciples, perhaps so that JESUS might have something to eat.

Of course, we know that JESUS multiplied that gift to provide more than enough food for everyone. But I couldn't help but think about the offering of that boy. What if he hadn't given that small amount of food? What if he had kept it for himself to eat alone? Would the miracle still have happened?

We easily underestimate what GOD can do with our gifts when we willingly give them. Yet, we often hold them back. Perhaps we think they're too small to make a difference. Perhaps we would rather keep them for ourselves. Perhaps we just don't make the connection between what we might give and the difference it can make for others.

As a congregation, we give to a lot of different things. Food pantries, world disasters and needed relief, global conflict, and so many others. Do we realize how much good GOD is doing with our gifts?

As I read Matthew's account of the great miracle and thought of that little boy who gave his lunch for others, I wondered what story he had to tell at the end of the day. Surely, he must have been surprised by how much was gathered when the meal was over. I hope he got some to take home. But it must truly have been a joy to watch that bread and fish being handed out and never run out. I wonder if he really realized that it was accomplished with his small gift and was glad that so many got to eat.

It would be easier to give if we actually saw the results. It would be easier to give if we could tell the story of what happened because of our gift. We might not have that luxury, but that's also part of faith. For many of us, it has to be trust in what GOD is doing and knowing that we had a small part in making ministry to others a reality. We usually don't have the specific details, but we can still find joy in knowing that because of what we have offered, others are being blessed.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey