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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA
FEBRUARY 27, 2005
PASTOR MARK FRY

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: I want to set the stage a little
2 bit. Well-stocked tackle box is my theme for today.

3 So I brought in my tackle box and it has so much
4 junk in it.

5 If I get my nap in today I'm going down for the pan
6 fishing lecture at 3:00 o'clock at the Omaha Sports & Travel
7 Show.

8 I'm going, I have been bitten by the bug, and I
9 have all this junk in here that I never use.

10 Fortunately I don't use the first aid kit very
11 often, but I have spare reels, and I've got this fancy
12 looking gaff and all this junk in here.

13 That's an antique. I got it from my grandfather
14 when he passed away and I have all these different lures and
15 stuff in here.

16 I have a well-stocked tackle box and I tell you
17 what. It's kind of interesting because when I actually do
18 get out fishing all I do is I bring along that little vest
19 that is hanging there and all this stuff stays at home, but
20 it looks good, doesn't it?

21 And that's where I want to go today. It's really
22 not about all the stuff we've got; it's about the stuff that
23 God provides. So we are going to get there.

24 If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those,
25 I'm going to come back and forth to the texts of the 14th

1 and 15th chapter.

2 God has such a great sense of humor and a great
3 plan for all things.

4 Right between these two stories that we are going
5 to look at there is the story that we are using for the
6 Wednesday night theme, that story of getting out of the
7 boat, of Peter attempting to walk on the water.

8 Because we as Christians believe that significant
9 things happen beside the water and in the water, baptism,
10 all the great stories in the Bible, that things that take
11 place by the well and besides the seashore and I want to
12 look at those a little bit with you today.

13 The water walking story is in there, the 14th
14 Chapter, the 22nd through 32nd Verses, but I have a couple
15 of fisherman quotes for you today.

16 The first one is from a guy named William
17 Hertzburg.

18 He says, "A fisherman will spend almost as much
19 time in tackle shops as he will upon the trout stream."

20 That's true for a lot of us. In fact, I was
21 talking to somebody after the 7:45 service.

22 He said, "Really, we spend more time doing that
23 around here. There's not that much water around."

24 He, like me, had come here from Minnesota where
25 anywhere within a five mile, five minute distance, you can

1 hit about ten different lakes.

2 But it's a little different here, it's a little
3 dryer here, and so some of us take advantage of that time in
4 the tackle shop.

5 The second quote is, "Your outfit may be elaborate
6 or it may just be a cane pole, but fortunately the size of
7 your kit is no indication of the pleasure you derive."

8 That's what I want to get to you. It's not about
9 how much stuff you've got, and how many fancy depth finders
10 and lures and all the different stuff you've got.

11 A well-stocked tackle box looks a little different
12 in the kingdom of God.

13 So we are going to get there. My title is that
14 well-stocked tackle box and I'm going to call it blessed
15 leftovers.

16 In these two stories, the feeding of the five
17 thousand men, and the feeding of the four thousand men,
18 there is a lot of really cool things that we can draw and
19 extrapolate from those two stories.

20 When I gave my first sermon of 2005 I used a story
21 from the Gospel of John when he was telling the story of
22 Jesus feeding five thousand people.

23 And in that story there is a little boy who gives
24 his lunch.

25 There is a small child here who has a few small

1 loaves and a couple of fish. So Jesus multiplies and
2 blesses in that way.

3 The child is missing in the stories today,
4 literally, but we sense that he's still there.

5 And in that story in John, and in that story in the
6 14th Chapter, if you look closely at the 14th Chapter, Verse
7 20:

8 "All ate and were filled. They took up what was
9 left over of the broken pieces. Twelve baskets full."

10 There were twelve leftovers in the feeding of the
11 five thousand men.

12 And then right across the next page in John 15 we
13 are going to notice that there are seven baskets of
14 leftovers from this feeding incident, and this is in Chapter
15 15, Verse 37.

16 "All of them ate and were filled and they took up
17 the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full."

18 So I used the twelve leftovers in my annual state
19 of the church address.

20 And I was talking about how the twelve leftovers
21 that God has given us will feed and lead this world to
22 Christ.

23 And I talked about our church council, our
24 wonderful staff we have here, our wonderful women's groups
25 we have here, the Bolivian Street Project and all the

1 different mission things.

2 I had a dozen different things for that. Today I
3 have seven, because of the seven leftovers in that 15th
4 Chapter.

5 So I call this the seven significant morsels that
6 hopefully will feed you today and lead you tomorrow.

7 I'm going to run down the seven and if you've got
8 your Bible you can follow along.

9 In that 14th Chapter, the first twelve verses are
10 incredibly significant.

11 We need to understand the context that Jesus is
12 arriving within this morning.

13 What is happening in that 14th Chapter is there is
14 this huge birthday party and Herod is this evil king and
15 powerful person.

16 And he makes this promise in Verse 5, "Though Herod
17 wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd."

18 He's talking about John the Baptist.

19 "But when Herod's birthday came, and the daughter
20 of Herodias danced before the company," they had this really
21 provocative dancer that was up, and Herod was so impressed
22 by that he made a promise to her.

23 And he said: Whatever you want, you can have it."

24 And she said, "I want the head of John the Baptist
25 on a platter."

1 And Herod is in this embarrassing situation of
2 saving face publicly.

3 So he grants her wish and he has John the Baptist
4 put to death in that horrible manner.

5 So John the Baptist is beheaded and the head is
6 brought on a platter in the midst of this birthday party.

7 So what I want to point out in that is that's what
8 is happening.

9 Right away when we read in the 13th verse, "When
10 Jesus heard this he withdrew from there in a boat to a
11 deserted place by himself."

12 Matthew, as the great story teller that he is, he
13 is setting the stage here and he's contrasting two things.

14 He is contrasting the wanton violence of Herod,
15 because Herod has this power thing going on.

16 And then in contrast to that we are going to be
17 introduced to the incredible compassion of Christ. The
18 compassion of Jesus.

19 So those two stages are being set. This opulent
20 indulgent birthday party where a murder takes place.

21 And then this simple gathering of all of these
22 people for the simplest of meals, the fish sandwich, the
23 fish and bread.

24 So those two things are in contrast, and then if we
25 notice closely in that 14th Chapter, we'll notice he says it

1 twice, in Verse 8 he says, "Give me the head of John the
2 Baptist here on a platter."

3 And then in Verse 11 the head was brought on a
4 platter.

5 You can almost envision this as a silver platter,
6 he's bringing it.

7 So we've got on the platter and then when we look
8 closely at the contrasting stories and we notice John's head
9 is on the platter and God's people are spread out on the
10 grass.

11 Again, simplicity. There is nothing silver about
12 this. But it's a golden moment. So that is my second
13 significant morsel.

14 Matthew is telling this fabulous story. He's
15 weaving these two contrasting things together.

16 The third significant morsel, we notice right away
17 in both of these feeding stories that the disciples have a
18 concern and their concern is crowd control.

19 How are we going to handle the numbers? How are we
20 going to get them out of here?

21 How are we going to get them sent off to get
22 something to eat? How are we going to manage this many
23 people?

24 That's the disciple's notion. That's kind of a
25 power thing as well.

1 But what we notice is Jesus's main concern is crowd
2 compassion.

3 And notice again he has heard that John the Baptist
4 was beheaded.

5 And you have to realize, too, that John the Baptist
6 was Jesus's mentor, he was his cousin, he was his
7 confidante.

8 He was his partner in the ministry in some ways.
9 He baptized Jesus in the River Jordan.

10 And Jesus holds John the Baptist in such high
11 esteem and he has just heard he's murdered.

12 And so what Jesus does is he withdraws by himself
13 to a deserted place.

14 And if I had done that, if my mentor, my colleague,
15 my partner, my pastor, my friend had just been brutally
16 murdered by Herod and I needed some time to myself, that
17 would be kind of natural. We need some time away.

18 But notice Jesus takes this time away and
19 immediately in Verse 14 they followed him on foot from the
20 towns and when we went ashore he saw a great crowd.

21 And I would have been like, "You guys, I'm on
22 vacation. I'm sorry. I've had it right now. I need some
23 time to myself."

24 But notice what Jesus does. He sees them and he
25 cures their sick and he has compassion on them.

1 The same thing happens in the 15th Chapter. The
2 disciple's concern is crowd control; Jesus's concern is
3 crowd compassion and that's what sets him apart.

4 So my fourth little significant morsel of the seven
5 is the physical and spiritual feeding story.

6 Matthew, when he says they were filled, there is a
7 Greek meaning to that that means utter satisfaction.

8 There is a contentment that comes with the meal,
9 that comes from the hand of Christ.

10 So their bellies are full, but they are hungry now
11 in a different way.

12 There is an old Reggae song that Brad has ready to
13 go. It's called "Them Belly Full But We Hungry".

14 It's a Bob Marley protest song. I love this
15 song.

16 "Forget your troubles and dance
17 Forget your sorrows and dance
18 Forget your sickness and dance
19 Forget your weakness and dance
20 Cost of living get so high
21 Rich and poor they start to cry
22 Now the weak must get strong
23 They say, oh, what a tribulation
24 Them belly full but we hungry
25 A hungry mob is an angry mob"

1 That's a song about the weak getting strong. He
2 used it as kind of a rise up from your situation song, of
3 the oppression of the masses.

4 But I see that in this story of Jesus. It's a
5 physical as well as a spiritual feeding.

6 And I'm all for feeding the hungry. That's part of
7 our call as Christians, is to go and share the bread of the
8 world.

9 But we need to be real sensitive about the fact
10 that this is first and foremost a spiritual matter.

11 We need to feed them and they also need to be fed
12 with the bread that will satisfy, that will fill them.

13 It's like the saying of give a man a fish, you feed
14 him for a day; teach a man to fish and you'll teach him to
15 fish for a lifetime.

16 There's a spiritual depth to Matthew's story.
17 That's my fourth little significant leftover.

18 The fifth one is, notice closely in both the
19 feeding of the five thousand men and the four thousand men,
20 Jesus does this sequentially.

21 He blesses, he breaks, he gives.

22 In both of those stories the first thing he does is
23 he prays; he blesses; then he breaks and he gives to the
24 disciples for them to distribute.

25 He later, Matthew is going to show us, is going to

1 be not blessed, he's going to be blamed, he is going to be
2 broken, and he's going to be given over to that same power
3 system of Herod's violence, and Pilate and all of his
4 minions.

5 So Matthew wants us to know this is a spiritual
6 story.

7 It's not just this really cool thing when Jesus
8 whips together this extravagant meal.

9 And his is a good model for us, especially in the
10 season of Lent, of intentionally taking and praying before
11 we eat our meal, blessing, and then breaking, and then also
12 giving.

13 What better time to go out of our comfort zone of
14 giving.

15 The sheer act of generosity is referenced and
16 modeled here by Christ in so many different ways.

17 This feeding of the five thousand is the only
18 miracle story that is told in all four of the Gospels,.

19 Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all have their way
20 with this same story.

21 The healing of Jairus's daughter, the walking on
22 the water story, all of those other stories, they aren't in
23 all four Gospels, but God really wants to get our attention
24 on this one.

25 It's in all four, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

1 That's highly significant to me. That's a good morsel for
2 us to dine on, I think.

3 And my last morsel is that trust issues dominate
4 the story.

5 There is always this common refrain of the
6 disciples, will there be enough, and is there enough for me
7 to go around?

8 That's a tough one, because it's interesting to me
9 that Jesus does this great miracle in the 14th Chapter,
10 feeds five thousand men, besides women and children.

11 And then one chapter later the same thing almost
12 identically happens and the disciples still don't get it.

13 Do you notice that? The same thing happens. Where
14 are we going to get enough food?

15 I mean, this is a deserted place they say in the
16 15th Chapter.

17 But notice the patience of Jesus. He says what do
18 you have? Give it to me.

19 And he blesses, he breaks, it gives it back to them
20 and they distribute it and then there's these seven blessed
21 baskets of leftovers.

22 But you notice in the 14th Chapter, the 20th Verse,
23 and the 15th Chapter, the 37th Verse, the same refrain, all
24 ate and were filled. All of them. Disciples included.

25 When we give it to Jesus he will multiply it and he

1 will distribute it and there will be more than enough.

2 But will there be enough is a common human concern
3 and so multiplication occurs when we imitate Jesus.

4 When we go off for a little quiet time by
5 ourselves, when we pray, when we break, when we give, we
6 will be blessed abundantly.

7 And that's maybe the most threatening boat for some
8 people to get out of, is that whole boat of generosity and
9 giving. That's water-walking.

10 Barb Baumert and I went to Bellevue I think about
11 six months ago and we met one of the new pastors that is
12 serving a church in Phoenix that I love very much.

13 It's a church called Community Church of Joy. His
14 name is Michael Breen and he's from England.

15 He was telling this fascinating story of his
16 sabbatical time in Africa.

17 And he was looking at these stories of the feeding
18 of the five thousand and the four thousand, so I am going to
19 try something today.

20 The feeding of the five thousand, we look at Verse
21 20, Chapter 14, Verse 20, all ate and were filled.

22 Then Verse 21, "Those who ate were about five
23 thousand men, besides women and children."

24 How many do you think were really actually fed in
25 this story?

1 There are five thousand men, plus women and
2 children? Does anybody have a guess, ballpark it.

3 Tony, what do you think? Can I put you on the
4 spot?

5 Forty-five grand. That's pretty generous. Way to
6 go, Tony. Forty-five thousand.

7 I'm going to do the math. Tony, he's a school
8 teacher, so he's probably in his mind calculating, you have
9 five thousand men, five thousand women, whatever, and then
10 you've got how many kids in each family?

11 So he has come up with forty-five thousand. That's
12 a big estimate.

13 Michael Breen says if you ask Americans and if you
14 asked Europeans that question they are going to come up with
15 a smaller number than if you asked Africans.

16 If you ask people in Africa how many probably were
17 fed in this story they are going to think in their mind,
18 their paradigm is, well, men aren't as active in the church
19 as women, so you have five thousand men, there must have
20 been at least ten thousand women, and the family sizes back
21 in Africa are ten, twelve people in the family, so the
22 children, look at how that multiplication thing comes on.

23 But the point being we, especially as Americans,
24 underestimate the abundance and generosity of God.

25 I never thought of that. I never looked closely.

1 I thought it was the feeding of five thousand, which is
2 impressive enough, but think of that.

3 What he's actually telling in the story is feeding
4 up to maybe eighty thousand, or a hundred thousand, with
5 just a few little fish and loaves, and likewise in the story
6 of four thousand.

7 They have been with him for a few days and he feeds
8 four thousand, maybe there was even a bigger crowd, four
9 thousand plus, maybe he attracted more women and children at
10 that point.

11 These ones had been with him so there is a little
12 bit of attrition, some of them faded away, maybe they
13 increased with all the more women and children.

14 But the point being we don't want to underestimate
15 the generosity of God and thereby shortchange our own.

16 We say, "Well, this little bit is going to help."

17 "You know he's going to multiply it. "

18 "Yes, but --

19 The generosity of God dare not be underestimated or
20 we do so at our own peril.

21 I got an article from the Tuesday morning World
22 Herald.

23 I don't know if as a parent or grandparent you read
24 John Rosemont.

25 A woman at the 7:45 service said when her kids were

1 younger she used to clip these out and make her kids sit
2 down and she would read them verbatim to her kids and they
3 would just roll their eyes. They just hated this guy's
4 parenting model.

5 This is kind of a squirmer today. It's called
6 "Greed Plagues Today's Youngsters" and Rosemont is a
7 clinical psychologist, I believe, and he's a prolific
8 writer.

9 He says, "I have a theory. Ironically it's one
10 that most grandparents aren't going to like, because if I'm
11 right, then today's grandparents are part of the problem.
12 My theory is this. The force driving most sibling rivalry
13 is greed. Today's parents, with more than a little
14 assistance from grandparents, turn their children into
15 greedy little materialists by buying them toy after toy,
16 after gadget after game, after vehicle after gizmo,
17 beginning before they are even born and lasting forever and
18 forever, amen," he writes.

19 "Because today's parents feed the narcissistic
20 spark that resides in the human heart of every newborn, it
21 grows into a flame and then a fire and one day a raging
22 inferno. By age four or five today's all too typical child
23 is affected with King Midas syndrome, which is to say he's a
24 greedy little hoarder who can't share anything.

25 "The more things you acquire," he concludes, "the

1 more likely you are to resent it when someone else acquires
2 something that you don't have. The more likely you are to
3 feel the other person's good fortune isn't fair. The more
4 likely you are to be jealous and covetous. Take note
5 parents and grandparents. Stop buying your children so many
6 things. Stop throwing fuel on the fires of narcissism and
7 materialism. At a relatively low level things will become a
8 drug that anesthetizes your children's spirit. Strengthen
9 your children's spirits by making and keeping them poor."

10 Ouch.

11 There is a great fisherman's quote that says it the
12 same way. This is old Sparse Grayhackle from my daily
13 devotional guide.

14 "If you need a piece of equipment, make it as light
15 as possible. If you don't need it, then leave it home."

16 Or he might even also say, "If you don't need it
17 don't buy it."

18 Again I reference my tackle box. I have all kinds
19 of stuff, but when I really want to catch fish all I really
20 take is a few rubber and plastic worms and a couple of extra
21 hooks and a sinker. That's what works for me.

22 When you go to Minnesota, or you go to Canada, you
23 stop at every Cabela's and everybody in those stores is
24 going to tell you what they are biting on.

25 And what they are biting on is usually about a four

1 or five dollar lure and then you better have every color,
2 because if the cold front comes through you want to be
3 prepared.

4 And, yes, they are biting, I just heard, Lake of
5 the Woods, they are hitting on this silver shad rap, and you
6 are going to want the three inch and the three and a half
7 and you are going to want the diving and the sinking and
8 they just keep piling it on and piling it on.

9 You get up to the resort and what does your Indian
10 guide say?

11 He says, "I don't know why you guys bring all this
12 junk. All you need are the little jigs they sell in the
13 kitchen for three for a dollar."

14 It's true. It happens more times than not. But we
15 have been wired to the consumer thing. We are going to get
16 bigger and better.

17 The conclusion I want to draw is that God will
18 provide.

19 I want you to turn with me to Second Corinthians.
20 We are going to have communion here in a moment.

21 Page 175, it might be different page in our Bible,
22 Second Corinthians 9, Verse 6.

23 The point is this, Paul would say, and Jesus would
24 say, "The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.
25 The one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

1 Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not
2 reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful --
3 receiver?

4 No. "Giver."

5 "For God is able to provide you with every blessing
6 in abundance so that by always having enough of everything
7 you may share abundantly in every good work."

8 We are in the distribution business, my friends in
9 Christ.

10 Notice Jesus blesses, breaks, and gives it to his
11 disciples.

12 That's us, and what are they supposed to do? They
13 are supposed to then give it to the rest of the world.

14 It goes through their hands. It goes through their
15 wallets.

16 It goes through their hearts to overflow into
17 abundant blessing.

18 My final example, my mother was in the hospital
19 this week.

20 Sunday night she was taken by emergency to the
21 hospital. Her appendix was largely inflamed.

22 They ran a CAT scan and the first thing Monday
23 morning they needed to get that thing out of there.

24 They got it out. She was in the hospital a couple
25 days.

1 I went over on Thursday morning early and she was
2 going to be dismissed that day so I got there Thursday right
3 around noon, helped her get relocated, got all the papers
4 and stuff.

5 She got home to her house about 4:00 o'clock
6 Thursday.

7 I needed to get her to bed, fix her something to
8 eat, run and do a couple errands.

9 I needed to get to the pharmacy to get her pain
10 medicine and stuff.

11 I came back, my mom is asleep, and there is this
12 woman standing there and she says, "Are you one of Yvonne's
13 sons?"

14 I said, "Yes, I am, and who are you."

15 She said, "Im Mrs. Elwick. I'm her new neighbor."

16 I said, "So nice to meet you, Mrs. Elwick."

17 She said, "I'm concerned about your mom. They took
18 her away in the middle of the night the other night and I
19 know your sister stopped in and said something. I have
20 something for you. Would you come into the house?"

21 I said, "Sure."

22 So I went in the house and in the kitchen there she
23 had a bowl of homemade custard that she had baked for my
24 mother.

25 And she said, "I want your mom to have this."

1 I said, "She's sleeping right now. I'll tell her
2 what you've done and thank you very much."

3 So I went back over and I put the custard right
4 beside the sink and my mom finally came out, her stomach is
5 real sore and stuff.

6 So I said, "Mrs. Elwick gave me some custard."

7 And she started to cry. I was like what is up with
8 this?

9 She said, "She must have known. I was dreaming of
10 having some custard when I got home and it feels so good to
11 be on the same page."

12 So she enjoyed that custard more than is humanly
13 possible.

14 This is a new neighbor, by the way, who just moved
15 in, her and her husband a couple months ago, right about the
16 time we were burying my step-dad.

17 But the point being it was really simple, just
18 custard.

19 Today it's really simple. It's just a piece of
20 bread and a few drops of wine, but it changes the world.
21 Because God multiplies it.

22 So don't hold back. Hold out today. Hold out your
23 hand as you receive.

24 You are going to be coming to the Lord's table and
25 everybody at Bethany is welcome at the Lord's table. You

1 don't have to be a member here.

2 When you come you are going to receive a wafer of
3 bread and you can dip it into the cup which contains either
4 wine or clear grape juice.

5 I am going to remember our Lord Jesus and how on
6 the night in which he was betrayed he took a loaf of bread,
7 and remember in the story the first thing he does is he
8 prays, he blessed, and then he broke.

9 And he gave it to his disciples and he said, "Take
10 and eat, this is my body, it is given for you. Do this in
11 remembrance of me."

12 And after supper he took a cup, when he had given
13 thanks he gave it for all to drink, "This cup is the new
14 covenant in my blood. It's shed for you for the forgiveness
15 of your sins, the times you have done things wrong; the
16 times you have not done things that are right. Do this in
17 remembrance of me."

18 We pray together. Our Father, who art in heaven,
19 hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on
20 earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread
21 and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who
22 trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but
23 deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the
24 power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

25