



March 8 – Together

Some say the glass is half full. Others say the glass is half empty. I am not interested in debating that. It is both. It is also contextual. For example, if you are enjoying soup and the glass of water is halfway, it feels like abundance. If you are eating, say, something that is overcooked and dry, you may look at the same glass and feel a little pressure. Now imagine it is a car with a tank of gas that shows at half. Now how do you feel? I am of a vintage that sees 5/8th a tank of gas and feel like I could drive for a long distance, but I see 3/8th and I start to get very nervous and think through all the gas stations that are nearby. Truth told, right at half I am starting to get nervous. I have been trained to feel that way.

We are trained to feel that way about a lot of things. We are trained to believe there will not be enough. That is how advertising works. If you feel comfortable, you will not be compelled to purchase. It is the goal of the ad to make you feel hungry, fear you are going to miss out on something, making you feel like you are not enough. It is as if we are being bombarded with messages that make you feel like the tank is at 3/8s.

The disciples feel this too. They are tired and run down. They all go with Jesus to a deserted place to try to rest and recharge. They are already feeling like empty is approaching. Then, they see the crowd showing up. Evening is not far away. They are overwhelmed. Their response is reasonable, “Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread?” Jesus’ response is a reality check. “How many loaves do you have?”

That is the starting place. The disciples take an inventory and return with five loaves and two fish. That does not seem like much. In fact, it is not very much at all. Jesus takes that and turns it into something far more that they could have asked or imagined. That gift is blessed and offered. One person at a time becomes a meal that not only feeds the crowd but has 12 baskets to spare.

Jesus stands with us, in this place, and asks the same question, “What do you have?” Now is where we return to the glass half full or empty or is it the top half of the gas tank or the lower half question. Many view the church as lacking or in the decline. We compare our numbers and attendance to those of twenty years ago and have come to believe that the glass is half empty. Others look at the declining membership in Lutheran congregations and speculate that the ELCA will cease to exist. There are others that cling to the fear-based marketing and exclude the “other” so that those who are present feel more secure. All of this falls short of what Jesus asks of us in this text.

What do we have? The truth is that we are blessed. I look at this room and see an abundance of gifts. It may not feel like much sometimes. I know. Our gifts, paired with the love of God, can move mountains. We have more than enough. I look out in this room and see our partners with MOSAIC. You are here on the perfect Sunday. I am so thankful for the work that you do, living the gospel in meaningful and tangible ways. In a world that looks at the world through the lens of scarcity, you empower people to use the gifts they have as a beacon of joy and love in the world. Even our congregational thank you cards use artwork created by a gifted individual from MOSAIC.

What do you have? At first glance it may not seem like much. Do not let that fool you. You have the gifts to be a beacon of God’s love in the world. And, when we pool our resources together with the love of God and the Spirit, we find that we have more than enough to navigate change and make the world a better place. That is the good news: together, the impossible is possible.

The world wants you to feel like you are not enough, that the world cannot and will not change. The world wants you to forget that with God all things are possible.

This text is a reminder that the glass is never half full or half empty. The water is not at rest. There is a spring bursting forth, and the cup is on its way to overflowing. Amen.

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