

**“Yes, We Will With Your Blessings”
Matthew 14:13-21**

Jesus heard that John the Baptist, who is thought to be his cousin, was beheaded by King Herod. So, in grief, he sought to withdraw to a “deserted” place where he could be by himself. He got in a boat and sailed to the other shore of a lake. When he got out of the boat, he found a large crowd of people waiting for him. They had learned that Jesus had left for the other shore and went by foot around the lake to be with Jesus. When Jesus saw the crowd, he was filled with compassion and healed those who were sick among them.

The crowd hung around with Jesus and it was getting late. His disciples asked Jesus to send the crowd away so that the people could get their supper in the nearby villages.

“They don’t need to be sent away for food,” said Jesus. “You feed them.” The disciples responded. “We have nothing here except for 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish.”

“Bring them here to me,” said Jesus. After he had the crowd sit down to receive the food, Jesus looked up to heaven, where all blessings come from, blessed the bread, broke it in pieces, and gave them to his disciples so that they could distribute them to the people sitting there.

Everyone ate and became full. There were more than 5,000 people - men, women and children. They still had twelve basketfuls of bread left over from the meal.

This story is recorded in all four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

What does this story tell us—about God, Jesus, the disciples, the crowd and us?

What can we learn from it?

1. When we sense or feel God’s nudge to do something, start small. Focus on what we have and not on what we don’t have.
2. Bring what we have to Jesus, however small it may be or look, to bless it. Whether it may be physical resources, intellect, some talents, skills or courage, what we bring to Jesus is our offering to him and he blesses it.
3. Be ready to receive the results or follow through with our actions. (Jesus ordered the crowd to sit down to receive a meal.)
4. Whatever the result may be, share it with others and be generous.
5. Jesus gave the bread and fish to his disciples to distribute to the people.
Involve others in God’s work. Try not to do everything alone.
6. Jesus meets us in a “deserted” place” and heals us. Jesus wants to meet us in the “deserted” places of our lives and wants to heal us. Then Jesus wants us, his disciples, to go and meet others in the “deserted” places of their lives so that we can offer and share the bread - the bread of life—with others.... so that we can share God’s compassion with them.

Many of the things our church is now proud of started small.

I hear that our Thrift Shop, which is a wonderful outreach to our community in many ways, started off as a rummage sale in a garage, which belonged to Wesley House. A few volunteers ran

it in the beginning. Now we have about 50 volunteers and the Thrift Shop has its own house with five rooms on the first floor.

Our preschool, which has offered excellent early childhood education to our community, I think started small too in the building, which houses our current Thrift Shop. It has grown, thanks to the dedicated volunteers from our church.

How about Heifer Project? We started small and slow. We thought we might not make it to reach the Ark, a \$5,000 donation, to buy livestock animals for those who live in developing countries. Thanks to the Outreach leaders and the giving from this congregation, we completed the Ark. Praise be to God, who was in the multiplication of donations and offerings.

As I mentioned last week, LI-Can is a collaborative effort to end the Opioid epidemic on Long Island. CAN stands for Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods. It launched with a meeting which drew nearly 1,300 people this past April, which was beyond their expectation. It is a move to break the silence around Opioid addiction and to offer support to those who are suffering. The seed has been planted and it is slowly growing among Congregations, School districts, various organizations and neighborhoods. I hope we can host one of the listening post meetings at our church near the end of summer.

Sometimes we may get discouraged when we do not see the results of our actions immediately or the multiplication does not seem to be happening soon enough. I came across this message from the Upper Room this past Friday.

My friend Robin was discouraged. Only 13 children had attended our church's annual vacation Bible school. "We put all this money into it," she said. "I recruited people to help. I took the week off from work, and only 13 kids came." I told her about my first vacation Bible school. It was hosted by a small church, and only a handful of neighborhood children attended. I was one of them. "That's where I received my first Bible," I told her. "I also memorized my first Bible verse, and sang 'Jesus Loves Me' for the first time. Thirteen years later, when a friend shared the gospel with me and quoted John 3:16, I already knew the verse because I had memorized it so many years before." I didn't make a decision to follow Christ the summer I attended vacation Bible school. The kind people at that church never knew I came to faith 13 years later, but God used the verse they helped me memorize to open my heart. I've served God faithfully for over 30 years. Even if we can't see it at the time, we can trust that God's word always accomplishes God's purpose.

So, those who led Vacation Bible School at our church in the past, please remember you never know how, where and when the seeds you planted may sprout.

So, when Jesus nudges us or calls us to do something, let's focus on what we have, bring it to him to be blessed and do it even though it may be a small start. Let's be prepared to receive the results. That's all we are asked to do. The multiplication is God's work.

So next time when we hear Jesus say, "You do it," let's say, "Yes. We will, with your blessings."