

I have not heard of any hoarding issues lately. The last one I remember was about a year ago when rumors of a rice shortage were being spread and people were buying up all the rice they could find. Stores shelves were soon empty and the price of rice soared on the market. I am not sure if there ever really was a shortage and the prices have come down and the supplies seem stable today. We worry about tomorrow and about our daily bread. A trailer for an upcoming Oprah show talked about hoarding and will feature a woman who has enough food stored up to feed her family for a year. She cannot stop buying food. So, how much is enough?

Our Scripture texts this morning are two stories, centuries apart that deal with God providing our daily bread. The first one from 2 Kings deals with a man bringing his tithe (the first fruits of his harvest) to the man of God. This is more than Elisha needs and in a society where bread is baked daily and preservatives are rare Elisha instructs him to share it with those who are with Elisha, "Give it to the people." This is a simple act of Elisha sharing the bounty God has given him with the people around him. The man however does not think this is enough bread for those gathered, "How can this feed one hundred people?"

We always wonder if we have enough. Our son Chris, the chef, always makes more than he needs. He says he would rather have leftovers than not enough. We have a friend (now this may be you but you are not the one I am thinking of). She always brings two casseroles to church dinners. She is afraid there will not be enough and wants to make sure no one is left out. She usually takes the second one home but that is okay – she is prepared, just in case so everyone can have enough.

Elisha is not concerned. His simple statement (paraphrased): "It is enough!"

The crowds have been following Jesus. He asks Philip a simple question: "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat." Now this is in the age before corner bakeries and supermarkets. However, I am not sure if even today Safeway or Albertson's would have enough bread on hand to feed 5,000 plus people. (Note some of the Gospel stories use 5,000 men, not counting the possibility of women and children). And, even if our local stores had the amount of bread we needed, we, like Philip, would ask, "How are we going to pay for this?"

Philip does not seem concerned with the amount needed but the funds needed to purchase the bread. This much bread would take at least six months' wages. It is a practical response that we use often today. We respond to challenges with, "We don't have the money/resources." Or, "Even if we could, where would we get the money to pay for it?" We fail to see beyond the practical to the possibility of miracle.

Now, how much bread do you need to feed 5,000 people? I am having a hard time getting my head around how much we need to feed about 100 people at the Evergreen annual meeting in October. What if we run out of food? What if we only have enough for a taste? Who wants just a taste when some have their plates full?

Whenever I am in Trader Joe's I go and check out the free sample. Now this is only a taste and it usually leaves me wanting more. Of course, this is why they give out the samples. They want us to go and purchase the product they are demonstrating. But a taste is seldom enough. We don't want people to go away not fed only having a taste of what we have to offer. What is the solution?

Andrew has one. Now think this through. There are 5,000+ hungry people and Andrew comes up with a young boy who has his lunch with him. Here is a young man who has five loaves of bread and two small fish. What is Andrew thinking? Is he serious? I mean which

one of us would even make such a suggestion? What good is a young boy and his lunch with so many people to be fed? This is more than we can comprehend. Even to make such a suggestion seems off the wall for our rational minds. However, Jesus responds: “It is enough!” (my paraphrase). And, as with Elisha, there are leftovers after all have been fed and satisfied.

Now as I reflect on these stories I am not concerned with the miracle. What struck me as I read them is that both stories meet an immediate need. They are not thinking of what will happen tomorrow or down the road in six or eight months. There is a need that needs to be met right now. There is no long term commitment to hold a free breakfast every Saturday for the homeless in the community or whatever. This is a need that needs to be met right now. People are hungry and need to be fed.

I also see both give what they had at the moment. The man has brought his tithes and he is presenting it before the Lord to Elisha. The young boy has his lunch and he too is presenting it before the Lord. This is what they have right now. They may have more or less tomorrow but this is what they have now. They use what they have to meet the need of the moment.

Tony Campolo tells the story of his meeting with a group of women at a Mainline church near his home in the Philadelphia/St. David’s area of Pennsylvania. He was the “featured” speaker at one of the more prominent churches in the area women’s conference. There were, if I remember the story, a hundred or so women present. Just before Tony was to speak the chairwoman read an impassioned letter from a missionary asking for \$10,000 to meet an immediate need. After she had read the letter the chair turned to Tony and asked him to pray that Brother Bob’s needs would be met. A logical response. What most of us would do in the situation.

Tony stood and said “no”. Now can you see the expression on the chair’s face when he gave her this response? He then proceeded to take all the money he had with him – about \$1.75, his train fare home – and placed it in the offering plate. The story goes that he then challenged the chair to place all the cash she had with her in the offering plate – no promises of pledges to come later, just the cash she had at the moment. He then continued this challenge to all of those present. The offering plates were passed and the amount counted. A little over \$12,000 has been received. Tony then stood before the gathered women and gave thanks that God had met the need of Brother Bob with abundance!

Do we believe that God is able to meet our daily needs? Are we willing to give God what we have right now? God knows what we have.

How would we respond if we were asked to feed 5,000 people today? What if all we had were five loaves and two fishes. Would we deem it enough? Do we believe, “it is enough”? Do we believe God is able to supply the resources to meet the challenges placed before us, whatever they may be?

Hear again the conclusion to our story from 2 Kings: “He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.”

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quoted is from [NRSV](#), NCCC/USA 1989