

**Sermon Title: Five Barley Loaves and Two Fish****Bible: John 6:1-21 (NRSV) / Psalm 14 (CEB) and John 6:1-15 (CEB)****When:** on Sunday, July 25th, 2021**Where:** about 25 people (including YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC & about 30 people (including Facebook Live viewers) at Hollister UMC**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we are so grateful for what we eat, what we have, and where we are. You pour out your grace and love upon us. Your grace and love is overflowing! Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

**1. Five Barley Loaves and Two Fish**

Today's Gospel reading of John from the lectionary is a very famous story. Jesus fed five thousand. He did it only with five loaves of bread and two fish. There were twelve baskets of leftovers. I love this story a lot. Some people might doubt this miracle, because it does not make sense, according to our reason or science. How could he feed five thousand with only five loaves of bread and two fish? Maybe at first, many people were hiding what they had brought with them. After a boy or a youth unselfishly shared his five loaves of barley bread and two fish, others were so touched that they started to share what they had. That's how five thousand could be fed. This sounds very reasonable. But to me, Jesus is God. Then, what could be impossible? I have not only a reason, but also a faith. So, I believe that Jesus fed five thousand!

This miraculous story gave me a lot of insights: it gives me gratitude and joy, and sometimes it bothers me.

## **2. What I Eat**

I love to eat. I know the joy of eating together. Jesus fed five thousand. But how about me? I know that there are still many people and children in the world who literally starve to death. When I was a college student, I read a book called “Betting on Famine: Why the World Still Goes Hungry” by Jean Ziegler. We have enough food. But sadly and unfortunately, it is not distributed in such a way as to feed all people. Another lectionary reading for today, Psalm 14, bothers me. There are some people who say “There is no God.” They take advantage of God’s people as they eat bread. Because I eat a lot, this learning from my studies and the Scripture readings bothers me. Am I one of those who eat more than I should eat? I found myself not wanting to eat out, because of some kind of guilty feeling. I could not enjoy eating, because I knew that there were people who were going hungry. I used to tell myself that I had much more than I needed. I gave myself a hard time. I should not eat out. I should eat less and less. Then, I realized that I might be the one who says, “There is no God,” in another way. Like an orphan, who does not have parents, I was not able to enjoy my life and what I have. God is our Father and our Mother, like our parents who have been generous in taking care of us. Now, when I eat out, my guilty feeling goes away. I do not eat out everyday, but I really enjoy what I have when I do and give thanks. I am also thinking of what I can do for those who are hungry. I try to live a more balanced life. Then, someday, like the youth in today’s story, I can bring my own five barley loaves and two fish to God and God’s people.

### 3. Where We Are

When I meditated on today's message, I realized that not only what we have, but also where we are can be a blessing. We are all struggling in this pandemic. Thankfully, because we live in the United States, we have the freedom to choose to get the COVID-19 vaccine. According to our own decisions, we can get the vaccine, and we can also decide not to get the vaccine. In the case of Korea, there was no freedom to choose COVID-19 vaccine, because they could not get the vaccine. Many countries which have vaccines need to take care of their own citizens first. So, they blocked the export of the vaccines. I totally understand this. It is not selfish. It is self-care. Because I live in the U.S., regardless of my immigration status, I had the freedom to choose to get the vaccine. I am lucky and thankful that I am fully vaccinated. Now that many people in the U.S. are vaccinated, the government has started to export vaccines to other countries. I am so proud of this country, America. America is not only a land of freedom, but also a land willing to spread the freedom of getting vaccines. Korea is one of them. My parents and families in Korea now are waiting for the opportunities, the freedom, to get the vaccine. I highly encouraged my parents to take advantage of the opportunity to get the vaccine. I also shared my experience of side effects: a fever and an ache in my back and shoulder, and how it would be fine. But many countries in the world do not have vaccines yet, and their people cannot have the freedom or the opportunity to choose the vaccine. They cannot have the most effective tool to fight against the COVID-19 virus. That's why I believe that we have alpha, beta, gamma, and delta variants, and maybe lambda variants, too. During this pandemic, what we learned is that we are all connected to each other in the world. This is an unavoidable or

sacred truth, as we are all God's children and people. I believe that like a youth who brought five loaves and two fish, America brings many vaccines to the world. I hope that we can surely help more than five thousand people together.

#### **4. Overflowing Grace**

I love God's grace and love. I love the character of God's grace and love. It is overflowing. When you receive God's grace and love, please be thankful and enjoy a lot. That grace and love is for you. But we will know that God's grace is overflowing. In that time, please let the grace overflow through us to others. Then, we might see a miracle that we cannot explain with our reason, the miracle that God shows us. So, let us bring what we have to the Lord. Then, God may make a miracle here and now.

#### **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, your grace and love is upon us. It is pouring out upon us. And it is overflowing. O Lord, please lead us to be thankful for your love and grace. Please use us as your means of overflowing grace and love. In Jesus' name. Amen.