

2 Kings 4:42-44

John 6:1-21

Ephesians 3:14-21

“The Lord is near to all who call on God;
to all who call on God in truth.” Amen!

“Do you believe in magic?”

I considered briefly singing that song
by the band The Lovin’ Spoonful,

(Do you believe in magic?)
but I only know how to sing that line! :-)

It might sound funny to hear a pastor speak
about magic from the pulpit, but
the kind that I mean is NOT the...

pull the rabbit out of the hat kind.

The magic, I mean, is NOT the fun
sight of hand stuff that I
sometimes stumble through
in a children’s message. :-)

It’s the kind of magic that is REAL,
if you believe in it.

The mystery and “magic” of the universe.

The mystery and “magic” of pleasant surprises

from unexpected sources.

Generosity from an angry recluse or
the welcome from a previously hostile individual.

It's magic because it cannot be explained.

It's magic because, though we see it happen,
we can't believe it was possible.

I'm beginning to learn that this is the kind of
thing that sometimes happens in a sermon.

Something difficult to explain happens
when the sermon rings true in the ear
of the listener.

There's a conviction... yes, and there should
also be a freedom proclaimed because
we all have obstacles to overcome.

And life has a way of placing before us
unexpected obstacles, doesn't it.

Things we don't count on are thrown at us and
difficult or even disturbing circumstances
that are not only challenging,
but strike at the very core of our faith in
God's work.

There's our health, work or career,
shelter and food insecurities,
political leaders and power plays, and
all of these things upon us and
the people we love.

Sometimes it feels like our prayers go unanswered
and that there's no way for a positive
outcome to occur.

But, then a friend, or family member,
or sometimes even a stranger, is able
to see something we hadn't been able to see

and they say what they see to us or
they offer the hand we need to hold onto or
the shoulder we need to cry on.

Their insight and their willingness to walk
alongside us brings, what I'm beginning to call,
unexpected magic.

We meet the complicated and emotional
challenges that life brings our way...
well, we meet them, magically.

I think that was what occurred at the
feeding of the 5,000.

Magic occurred that cannot be explained.

Today, we pivot now to John's gospel and
we will be here until September,
so we need to prepare ourselves
for the "magic" that John's
gospel provides.

Not slight of hand magic, but unexplainable
and mysterious magic where Jesus brings
forth surprising bounties from
very small things.

They cannot be explained, these bounties or signs,
so we simply sit in the wonder of them.

We marvel the way Jesus,
even though he needed rest and time away
to recharge,

looked up and saw a large crowd
coming toward him and saw the way
they needed food.

Not only spiritual feeding but
perhaps more important,
they needed physical food.

I'd have asked Jesus,
 "Why not turn the rocks into
 bread and feed them?"

The tempter asked a question like that, too,
 but Jesus asked a different question
 when he turned to Philip and asked,

"Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?"

Jesus asked a "where" question and
 Philip answered the way we so
 often answer Jesus.

With a "we don't have enough," response. (Pause)

So, Jesus, even though he's tired and
 in need of rest and prayer, he takes the time
 to teach the disciples something that
 we also need to learn.

That is, when situations we hadn't expected
 present themselves,
 the first person we turn to is Jesus!

This physical challenge, feeding the large crowd,
 could not have been solved without
 having a spiritual implication.

And the only way I feel comfortable in putting
that into words... is that it was magic.

The Jesus in you (and me) presents itself
to the hungry, the lost, the grieving,
and the displaced.

The Jesus in you presents itself
to the people who are spiritually hungry, too.

Jesus could have turned the rocks into bread and fish,
but instead chose to work his magic
through people.

And in this case, through a small child...
whose mother, earlier in the day,
made him pack a lunch. :-)

In this account from John, it cannot be ignored that,
in a man's culture - where men were the
only one's "counted,"

women and children were there and
they were (and are) agents of Jesus' miracle.

It's another way that Jesus makes
an abundance out of small things. (Pause)

Our church, community, state, and nation

must always be reminded that Jesus,
through people, can make an abundance
out of small things.

The least magically become the greatest.

And when the Philip's around us
(or even when I am the Philip!) say,

"That's too big for us," we need
the Andrew's (or Andrea's) to say,

"Look, there's a child here
with 5 loaves and two fish."

And then look to Jesus and say,
"But what are they among so many people?"

If, not if - when, we present them to Jesus...
then watch what will happen.

Out of the little we offer,
Jesus creates an abundance to share.

I can't explain how... it's just magic. (Pause)

We sit in the wonder of it all, but not for long
because this Jesus draws us deeper into
God's mission of feeding and providing

for those who are hungry,
both physically and spiritually hungry.

What miracle does God have in
store for this small congregation?

We are watching for it.

Praying for it and presenting
what we have to the Lord.

Does it has something to do with
this unused space in the
building next to this one?

The miracle we watch for also
has something to do with our location
being so close to the Capitol because
the church needs to be speaking
to decision makers and
law writers about policy that gives voice
to justice and equality.

Don't let yourself be like Philip and
focus on the scarcity.

Let's be like Andrew that said,

“Look, there's a child here that has a few things.”

Let's be like the mother of the child
who prepared the lunch and let's be like
the child who carried it for a while and
then gave it away for Jesus to multiply.

AMEN!