SERMON

The feeding of the five thousand.

It’s a familiar story that we know quite well.  Jesus is surrounded by a large crowd.  It is getting late in the day and people start to get hungry.  Everyone looks around confused and unsure of what to do.  Jesus decides he wants to feed the people but the disciples say that it will cost too much.  Soon enough, it is discovered that one young boy has tucked away in his knapsack, presumably hidden from this hungry mob, 5 loaves of bread and two fish.  Which seems like a lot for just one boy to be carrying but the story goes on anyways.  This meager amount of food seems like a waste of time if you ask the disciples.  It will never be enough. What are five loaves and two fish for five thousand hungry people?

But then, Jesus has everyone sit down, he takes the loaves of bread and the two fish and he turns it into enough food for everyone to eat, in fact, there’s leftovers.

It’s a nice and familiar story.

I don’t know about you, but even though this is a familiar story, anytime a miracle story like this comes up, it always seems to throw me for a loop.  My mind takes over and I start asking all sorts of questions. Did this really happen? What’s the truth in this story?

In the movie *Big Fish*, Edward Bloom tells the story about the day his son was born.  As the story goes, he’s using a fishing line that was so strong it could hold up a bridge…. and using only his wedding ring as bait, Edward caught an uncatchable fish on the day his son was born.

Over and over again, at any chance he could get, Edward would tell this story, much to his son’s embarrassment.  And over time, Will began to hate that story; because he didn’t believe it.

He knew his father wasn’t telling him the truth and he lost all trust in his father.  Over the years, they grew apart and their relationship was strained.  But then, many years later, Edward had a stroke.  And as Will sat beside his father’s bedside, in walks the very doctor who had delivered Will.

“You ever hear the story about the day you were born?” the doctor asks?

 “Yeah, like a thousand times. He caught an uncatchable fish.”  “No, I mean the real one,” the doctor replied.

“On the day you were born, your mother came in about 3 in the afternoon. Her neighbour drove her because your father was away on business.  You were born a week early. But there were no complications.  It was a perfect delivery.

Your father was sorry not to be there….and that’s the real story of how you were born.”

“Not very exciting, is it?, says the doctor.  “I supposed if I had to choose between the true version and an elaborate one about a fish and a wedding ring, I might choose the fancier version too.”

Sometimes, the point of the story isn’t to worry about whether it happened or not, but what the story itself is trying to say.

So here we are today, we have a story about a man named Jesus.  A man whom we claim to be the revelation of God for us.  And he feeds five thousand hungry people with a meager five loaves and two fish….kinda unbelievable isn’t it?

It’s a story that says, “Jesus is about feeding people who are hungry.” Which to us means God is about feeding people who are hungry.

It says that God can work with the meager offerings of the people, to do great things for the needs of this world.  It says that God can take the puny and insignificant things that we’ve tucked away and kept hidden from those around us and God can use it.

It says that when you’ve got almost nothing to give, God can use that too.

Sometimes we hear people talk about the way things used to be for our churches.  Back when the church was packed and the offering plates were full.  Back when parents didn’t have to make their kids go to church. They wanted to go to church.

But maybe this time in the church when things are a little uncertain.. when the pews aren’t full, when we wonder if the offering will pay the bills…, when it seems like there are 5,000 mouths to feed and only 5 loaves of bread and a couple of fish…maybe that’s rich and fertile soil in which God can use us, to do great things.

Amen