

**Grace Lutheran Church**

**The Rev. P. Stevens Lynn**

**Last Sermon before Retirement**

**Sunday, July 29, 2018**

**Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – John 6:1-14**

***Grace to you and Peace from God Our Father and  
Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen***

A two point sermon today. One – As always I want to look at our Gospel Lesson and see what Word of God may be revealed to us today through it. And 2. Since it is my last sermon as your called Pastor, I want to share in a nutshell what I believe about Jesus and life as a Christian. Let's go – The first part – The Gospel Lesson.

It's always best to place your resources and your needs into the right hands. Ask me to do a complex math problem. The results will be ugly. Ask me to visit someone in the hospital to bring them hope and pray – I can do that. The bottom line: place what you have and what and what you need into the right hands, and you'll get good results.

In our Gospel Lesson today, Philip saw a hopeless impossibility, turned into an amazing reality. Let's look at it. Way over 5,000 people were gathered there, lunch time came, Jesus wanted to feed them. How? Philip thought Jesus was crazy to even entertain that question. Will you help me Philip? Even if you have

no idea how I will do it? Philip, will you give me your worries and fears and let me take care of it?

We've all been there, haven't we, in seemingly impossible situations. For me, with the way I walk now, how will my hips and knees ever last? More surgery ahead? Ah! For me – how will I do beginning Wednesday – more time at home, no sermons, no visits, not being your Senior Pastor? Bigger question – How will Lois do with me at home more!?! For you – How will you get through a surgery or that cancer? How will your daughter do in college and away from home this fall? How will you pay for college? How will you take care of your Mom? How do you deal with tensions at home? Where is God in all that? In our Gospel Lesson, Jesus asked Peter to trust him. He asks us to do so too.

All of you know by now that I am a person who likes to be in control – to anticipate and even know outcomes and answers before I start. I know some of you are that way too. But when we insist on that kind of control, we can miss the joy of stepping out in faith and trusting in God. Andrew was like we are. He said to Jesus, “There's a boy here with five barley loaves and two fish.” Here they are, Lord – that's what we could gather – five loaves and two fish. That's good – Andrew and the little boy gave them up to Jesus. But then Andrew ruins the faith moment when he said – exactly what I'd say: “But what good are they among so many?”

We all do that – don't we? Most of our doubt about anything is manifested in worry, insecurity and fear. Sometimes we mask our insecurity and fear with arrogance or pompous behavior. The other end of that same insecurity and fear is played out when we believe our gifts and our very selves are not adequate and we somehow feel inferior and become unsure of ourselves and shy. It's not easy to do but it is true, when we share our worries and fears with Jesus, talk with Jesus about them; when we share our inadequate loaves and fish with Jesus – Jesus can and will do amazing things. On that day – Jesus gave thanks for the meager fare – loaves and fish – and then turned them into a feast. Jesus fed everyone and there were baskets left over.

This miracle story is not about how we can a little go a long way. No. This story is about how, when we share our worries and fears and insecurities with Jesus, Jesus can help us. For me, that's the Word of God gleaned from this Gospel today – and what I believe we needed to hear from it.

Now – Point 2 – On my last sermon, allow me to share what I've experienced and believe about Jesus and life together as Christians, and I promise, I'll do it in a few minutes.

You should know by now how this will go – Here it is: God loves you! God loves you so much that God wants to be in relationship with you forever. God doesn't need us, but God wants us. Through Jesus, God has insured that

relationship with us – we believe forever. We can do nothing to make that happen or add anything to it. All we can do is respond to it. There are thousands of ways to respond. But all of them, for a Christian, need to be under the heading of loving God and loving neighbor. And you've heard this, my Grace family one thousand times before from me – the best way to love God – to respond to God's love for you is to love your neighbor. Now, how? We all need to discern our personal response to Jesus' love. Personally – you know how best to do that. You know your gifts, your abundance – take care of your family and then use your abundance and your gifts for the neighbor. Look around. What can you do to help somebody, to ease a burden, to create a joy, to be kind and decent? Common decency in my lifetime is at an all time low. Don't you be part of that! Show love. Show love.

And collectively – as the Grace family – how do we best love God and neighbor? Do what you do now: vital worship, education, do all you can for our most growing demographic – youth and families – and as always take care of our aging members. And please, always continue to be welcoming and loving and accepting and inclusive to all people – all people. Continue to be a generous church. Stay involved in our community, and stay open to those in poverty. That's a great way for us – as Grace – to respond to Jesus.

For me personally, in my retirement from called ordained ministry, I plan to respond to Jesus loving me by: Continuing as I have, to give thanks each day –

talk with Jesus each day and then worship each Sunday; I plan to be a more present husband to Lois. For me that's a good thing – I hope it will be for Lois! I plan to continue reflecting Jesus' love by how I treat and interact and care for people around me. I want to keep responding to Jesus by being generous with my blessings. And I plan to work harder for justice – that means working to alleviate suffering and fear for all who are disenfranchised by poverty, here at home, climate change in other countries, to work to help those who are suffering just because they were born in the wrong place, and to help those who are taken advantage of by me and those of us with abundance, I hope to personally work harder at these things in retirement? Why? Because Jesus loves me.

In the future, when you remember anything about my ministry – about anything I've said – This is what I wish you to remember: This is the most important thing Grace Family: Jesus loves you. Love him back by finding ways to love your neighbor, by finding ways to welcome and include everyone. Find ways to do it. Find ways to seek justice. Find ways to love. Find ways to love. Why? Because Jesus loves you! It's that simple my family. My last official words: Jesus loves you.

And I love you – Thank you for loving me and Lois. *Amen.*