

Let us pray... Loving God, be with us today... Invite us into fullness of life through your abundance of grace... Transform the world through the gifts we bring and the love we share... Amen.

The concerts on the square have become a popular summer outing on Wednesdays and have grown in attendance over the years.

In fact, their website states that on average 2 thousand 5 hundred people attend every Wednesday concert...

And if you have been to one, or have been downtown on a concert night, you know how quickly that space becomes crowded with people...

And our Gospel today, talks about a crowd even larger than that...

A crowd of 5,000 people...

People, not in search of a concert, but people who are hungry for a new way of life...

As we hear in our Gospel, that Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near... And this is an important detail, because Passover during this time was always celebrated in the Temple...

And yet we have this massive crowd, Jesus, and his disciples nowhere near the temple... Rather they are in the middle of nowhere surrounded by a large grassy field.

Because these people are in search of something greater than anything they have ever known...

They are hungry to be with Jesus... To learn from him, and to experience God's grace, goodness, healing and love...

And I imagine that their world was not too different than our world...

Because I also hunger for those same things... I hunger for God's grace, goodness, healing, and love to be poured out in abundance...

Poured out over me... Poured out over all of you... Poured out over the entire world...

Because the world can feel really big sometimes... Making it so easy to wonder, what can I do, that will make a difference?

Especially since, so many of the world's problems are really BIG issues... Wars raging in other countries, messy politics, climate change, polluted waterways, poverty, inequality, and any forms of oppression and hate towards others...

And then there are the other issues, so often out of your control, but equally as devastating... Disease, sickness, and loss...

All to say that the world can feel overwhelming at times, and because of that it can feel like we are unequipped to make a difference...

And so, we go on hungering for a different world, a better world, where God's grace saturates all things in the abundance of God's love...

Which brings us back to our Gospel... As we have this massive crowd of people hungering for a different world, a better world.

Who in their hunger, completely forgot to bring actual food with them...

With one small exception.... A child...

As there was a young boy who brought a meager 5 barley loaves and 2 fish.

However, when he gave those 5 barley loaves and 2 fish to Jesus, something amazing happened...

Grace upon grace happened...

As this meal shows us what grace upon grace looks like, in all of its abundance... As Jesus takes this small meal and feeds not only 5 thousand people, but also produces 12 baskets of left-overs!

Which means this act, is not only about what grace upon grace looks like... This is also what grace upon grace tastes like, and feels like...

As this is the kind of abundance that satisfies more than physical hunger... It satisfies spiritual hunger, and what we yearn for in the world...

Afterall, this meal is not really about the bread nor the fish... Rather it is about what Jesus does with this meal.

Jesus shares this meal, and does so by giving of himself entirely, which has an astonishing result... It produces an overabundance...

An overabundance that fills our world and our lives...

An overabundance that was first rooted in this world... From what that little boy had given... And from what you and others have given.

As it is God who takes our gifts, and exponentially multiplies them in God's abundant love and grace...

Which takes the weight of the world off your shoulders... Because grace is not about what you can do... Rather, it is what God can do through you...

Because God is constantly at work—in you, through you, and with your many gifts...

From your personal gifts of what makes you, you... To your earthly gifts of time, donations, and contributions...

With those gifts, God can transform the world...

Creating the world God desires, a world where all the hungry are fed...

A world that is possible through all people, even the least of us, or the smallest of us...

Afterall, it was the young boy from our Gospel, out of all the people there, who gave Jesus some bread and fish...

And we are invited to do the same... To notice the many gifts, not only in yourselves, but also in others...

By loving, supporting, and encouraging others, and especially our youth.

As this is central to our call as Christians, and is upheld through the sacrament of baptism...

Where in just a little bit we will welcome our newest member through baptism... Charlee Grace Pagel...

And in baptism we are reminded of God's promises, and how they are poured out... While at the same time, it is also in baptism, where our promise are made.

The promise to pray for, and support Charlee, and to help her grow in the Christian faith and life.

So she can hear and learn from the good news of Scripture, like we did today...

When we heard this good news... That the possibilities are endless when we give our gifts to God...

As God's grace saturates our gifts in the abundance of God's love, and transforms the world...

From a world that we hunger for... Into a world... Where all are fed...  
Amen...