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The Boy Who Shared 5 Loaves and 2 Fish

Daniel was 8 years old now, not old enough to begin working, but certainly old enough to help and contribute. At home he gathered water each morning, bringing buckets from the river one by one to help his mother with the cooking, cleaning, and baking. In the field he helped his father with tending to the rye plants, poking tiny holes in the rows to plant the little seeds during sowing season, and picking weeds as they grew, until it was time to reap the harvest. He certainly did his part, but it never felt like much, and as one of 5 children, with another on the way, he was never really sure of his place or his purpose. Which seemed like a big deal. Especially given all the conversations he overheard his parents having. You know the conversations that adults have when they don't think children are listening, but they are still within ear shot. Conversations about things like the political climate (which Daniel didn't understand because he didn't think it rained inside the walls of Herod's palace), or the temperature of social unrest (which apparently was as hot as Gehenna the literal burning trash heaps). Even if he didn't understand, Daniel knew things were not good, his parents were often anxious, always worried about the next tax collection, or the yield of their crops. They prayed often, worked hard, and for the most part kept to themselves because they didn't know who was on "their side" or who they might offend. But, Daniel longed for more friends than his four sisters, and he certainly felt he had more to share beyond the four walls of his home.

When Daniel overheard his parents talking about how the man who performed miracles, the one who cast out demons, made the blind to see and the lame to walk, was coming to his region he knew he had to go. He had to see if this man, the one they call the Messiah, was as miraculous as they all said. He wanted to know could he really cast out demons, like those that overtook his own people, community, and family, the ones that caused so much fear and distrust. Could he really heal, say the hurt of division and the pain of cynicism.

Early that morning Daniel approached his mother, after collecting the water, and helping to dress and feed his sisters, asking if he could go to hear and see Jesus with the others from his village. Fearful her son was too young, too naive, and certainly too innocent for a half days trek to the field where Jesus was said to be, she hesitated to say yes. But, knowing he was wise beyond his years, always helpful, always attentive, always responsible she said yes. And, packed him 5 loaves of her freshly baked rye bread and two recently salted and dried fish, the entire meal she had reserved for their families supper that evening. Hesitant Daniel said no, "no Mom, I can't take all this, what will the sisters, and Dad, and you eat for dinner?" "Oh Daniel," his mother responded, "I trust you will use them wisely, and I have faith we can find what we need, just this once. You go, see, hear, and find the good news everyone is clamoring about. And come back and share it with us. That will be more than enough."

Daniel went, and traveled half a day's journey, following behind the crowd from his hometown. Till he arrived at a grassy knoll, as he peered over the hillside to see the throngs of people gathered. It looked like a literal army had amassed together as the people stood waiting in anticipation to hear and see and be with Jesus. Hesitant, but excited, Daniel moved into the crowd. But, he could tell something was wrong. Just like at home when his mother was strapped for time and resources when his sisters were whining and pawing at her feet, he knew exactly what was going on. The masses were hungry, and like

his sisters, he knew they wouldn't relax or behave and certainly wouldn't listen or be attentive, until they had had their fill. But, Daniel wanted his chance to see and hear Jesus, he wanted to find out the Good News, that he had promised his mother he would return with, the good news that might bring her and his family relief, comfort maybe even something like a miracle.

So Daniel did the only thing he knew how, he took what he had and he shared it. Approaching the ones who appeared to be in charge, a man named Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, as he said, "I have five loaves and two fish, I know it is not enough, but it is all I have and the people are hungry and we need to feed them." Shocked, Andrew thought this is not enough, I mean it's quite literally a laughable amount for this crowd. But, as the disciples had turned to Jesus for help, he had turned back to them to solve the problem, and so Andrew said to the twelve and Jesus, "well... There is a boy here who has five loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." And as we hear in John, "they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.'"

And so that day, Daniel witnessed the miracle he had been hoping for, as he saw people take, break, share, and be filled with just what they had, no more no less. It was not a lot, to be sure, but when everyone shared what they had it quickly and noticeably became more than enough. And just as Jesus told them, it was apparent that God's kingdom was not only coming soon, but was indeed all around them. For Daniel had never witnessed such a vast and varied crowd of people from all walks of life, various villages, and households, political stances, and ideologies, economic backgrounds, and fields of work all coming together as one to share a meal, to have their fill, and to settle in to listen to the words and the message of a poor carpenter from Nazareth.

Sometimes it can feel as though the world's problems are too big, too heavy, or just too impossible to even begin to tackle. But, here in our story of the feeding of the five thousand, and of Daniel's selfless and loving act, Jesus invites us to participate in everyday miracles. Because, when we are able to give what we can, to share what we have, and to give thanks, there is more than enough to go around. When we can look beyond our own lives, and remember that how I live affects how you live, offering ourselves, our resources, and our love to the world we can begin to glimpse and even experience the miracle of God's kingdom here on earth. How might we, like Daniel, witness to the unconditional love and abundance of the kingdom of God that is all around us waiting to be broken open like a loaf of bread, and shared like a good meal, with a world who is anxiously and desperately waiting all around us? I pray you will find the miracle that is within you and the world, the one Jesus points to and invites us to participate in, today, tomorrow, and always. Amen.