

The Good News is... Together, the Impossible is Possible

Mark 6:32-44

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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Her father sits on the floor, just a foot and a half away, as she bounces on teetering legs, one hand gently resting on the ottoman for that little bit of extra balance. He holds out his hands. He smiles and gently says, "Come on, Willow, you can do it." She smiles back at him, lifts her hand, but quickly drops it back to the security of its resting place.

She bounces.

She giggles.

He reaches out toward her again. "You know you want to walk, Willow. And, I know you can." He smiles in response to her shiny baby teeth peeking out from her grin.

"Are you ready?" he asks.

And as if he can see the question, "Are *you* ready?" roll through her brain, the expression on her face tells him it is time.

She bounces. She lifts her hand. She lifts her leg, raising and lowering it just enough to begin to propel her forward. One step. Two steps. Three steps. On the fourth step she falls toward him and he is there to catch her, swooping her up in the air. "I knew you could!" he celebrates as she giggles and nuzzles her face into his neck.

It's amazing what can happen when someone believes in us. It's amazing what can happen when we believe in ourselves. It's amazing what can happen when we know we are in this together.

Without reading earlier in the chapter, if all we hear are the specific verses we read today, we miss the confidence that Jesus had in the disciples. Earlier in chapter 6 Jesus sent out the disciples with the power to do what he had been doing - to preach, to heal, to cast out demons. In fact, if we read even just a

couple verses earlier in this story we hear, “The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught” (Mark 6:30, NRSV).

Jesus shared his power with the disciples *and* they used it effectively!

And yet sometimes they - and we - forget what is possible.

Maybe it was because they were tired.

Maybe it was because the size of the group that day was overwhelming.

Maybe it was simply because they were back with Jesus and sometimes it is just easier to let someone else do the work, especially when that someone else is Jesus.

Maybe it was because all the messages of scarcity that had surrounded them their entire lives started to creep back in... “there isn’t enough”... “you are not enough.” Those voices can be painfully persistent.

But the disciples couldn’t avoid the crowd that day. No, Jesus and his disciples were becoming known and as soon as people saw that they were nearby, they followed them.

They couldn’t avoid the crowd. They also couldn’t avoid Jesus’ compassion. He knew what these people were going through. He knew that life was hard. He knew that they worked hard one day and hardly had anything to show for it by the next. He knew that the demands of the empire were wearing. He knew that they longed for a leader who cared about the people and that there didn’t seem to be one in sight.

So, at the end of a long day, when a large crowd had gathered, when it made sense to send them on their way and declare that the show was over...instead, Jesus turned to the disciples and invited them to envision something more.

The disciples were ready to send the people home, to send them into the villages to get their own food, but to that suggestion Jesus, “answered them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ [And we heard what happened next:] They said to him, ‘Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?’ And he said to them, ‘How many loaves have you? Go and see.’ When they had found out, they said, ‘Five, and two fish’” (Mark 6:37-38, NRSVUE)

See, the disciples looked around and they could only see what was impossible. But Jesus saw something else.

He saw a community craving compassion and ready to care for each other.

He saw the power of what people who believe in abundance and justice and love can do.

He saw the gifts, not only his own, but of the disciples.

And he knew that when all these things came together, the results could be powerful.

And the gospels tell us that at the end of day over 5,000 - I say "over" because remember in our reading it was only the men who were counted - over 5,000 had been fed and the leftovers were abundant.

So, what about us?

See sometimes when we read this story we get so caught up in trying to understand the miracle, the mystery, that we forget to receive the invitation.

But, where are the places where we dwell too long on that which is impossible and in doing so deny our ability to make a difference?

Just think of all the things that wouldn't be happening in our community and our world if we were never open to new possibilities.

Just a week ago we served a meal at the Free Lunch Program. From that kitchen on Gilbert Ct. lunch is served daily, Monday through Saturday, to anyone who wants to eat...no questions asked. It isn't the Free Lunch staff alone who do this. It isn't our church or another single group that does this. But because people are willing to come together, to bring what they can, to cook and serve and donate as they can, a meal is served at an open table over 300 days of every year. Feeding hungry people...sometimes it seems impossible...but together, the impossible becomes possible.

This coming summer families with need, many of whom rely on the schools for their children's meals, will again have Summer EBT, extra dollars they can spend

to buy food for their children during the months out of school. A year ago, this seemed impossible. After all, the program had been discontinued and replaced with another that proved to be onerous, more difficult for both helping agencies and families, so people and organizations responded and together those voices worked to convince the decision makers to return to a program with a history of success that is able to be flexible for families. Feeding hungry people...sometimes it seems impossible...but together, the impossible becomes possible.

And this isn't just about food.

The reality is that it is easy to get discouraged. It is easy to get overwhelmed. It is easy to get caught up in the divisiveness, in the injustice, in the hurtful words and actions that surround us.

But, let us not forget that we have all the tools we need. It starts with compassion. It continues with paying attention. It moves forward with choosing hope over discouragement. It solidifies as we link arms with one another, each bringing the gifts the Spirit has given us, to stand for what is good and right and true.

Friends, sometimes everything feels impossible. Sometimes we can't see beyond our fear. But, what if we did? After all, Jesus has shared his power with us, too. How will we use it? How will we claim again that together the impossible just might...really could...actually will...become possible. Amen.