

2 Kings 4:42-44
Mark 6:30-44

St. John's Presbyterian Church
Devon, Pennsylvania, 19333
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Confirmation Sunday
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TRANSFORMATIONS A Charge to the Confirmands

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled. *Mark 6:41-42*

Last week our daughter Katherine sent us a picture of a new Telescope that her employer, George Mason University, in Virginia, has recently built. It's apparently the largest on the east coast attached to a university, and one of its main tasks will be looking for extra-solar planets in our Galaxy. Perhaps ten years ago I doubt if we'd discovered any—certainly none that might harbor life in some form. Now the count is over five hundred outside our solar system, and a few very possibly could have life forms—pond sludge, no doubt, just as we were a billion years ago—but it's a start.

Then there was another announcement this week that by counting telomeres, tiny protein strands that repair cell functions, we can now learn how long we are likely to live. No thanks! That's an excellent candidate for "too much information," but it is fascinating how far we've come in just fifty years of science.

As astonishing as these things are (and I love reading in the sciences) such things don't hold a candle to the feeding of the multitude with a paltry supply of food—that would barely feed any one of the Thomson, Repke, Little or Christy families, and all were fed, with excess!

What's all this got to do with confirmation? I'm glad you asked.

It's about discovering *who* God made you to be. Confirmands, remember how we said that Jesus didn't perform this miraculous feeding, neither did the disciples, and God certainly didn't suddenly take over. Something in the five thousand took over, something that God had placed in each one long before. Like us, they discovered that the best possible things happen, not when we keep good things to ourselves (bread and a few small fish, in this case), but when we give them away. Jesus said to the disciples—who were complaining that there wasn't nearly enough food—"You give them something to eat!" Then he gave a little bread—from the small round loaves the size of a man's palm—and a few tiny

pieces of fish to each disciple and they gave them to the people. And as the people passed it among themselves it never diminished!

Ah...ah...ah...! . . . no sly murmurings of disbelief. You've all been a part of such a miraculous distribution. Perhaps you had the seed of an idea that just took off at work. Or you started an outreach at school. Perhaps you had a brilliant idea, like our own David Markle, for a new type of sensor for NICU units, and it's saved the lives of who knows how many infants. Maybe you started a fellowship like Kathy Johnson and her team four years ago, and out of nothing grew Supper at St. John's for 50-70 people a week. Or the Kundas and Sheeps and others who funded and started a children's day school in Mexico so that working moms didn't have to tie their young children to the bed all day, just so Mom could work. Or Virginia Holt and her brigade who resurrected Carriage Club from twenty years ago, then worried about how we would possibly park everyone, so many keep turning out at lunch time. At Princeton Seminary in 1976, three colleagues and I started a book sale. We took in \$300 that first year. It's been running annually in March ever since. This year it made about \$40,000 as I recall. All to help Christian seminaries in poor countries buy books for their libraries. All these started as *creation-ex-nihilo*, something out of nothing. All Jesus did was inspire us. Don't tell me we can't perform miracles—together we transform lives every day!

This is the God to whom you confirmands pledged yourself this day. The God of earth and sky, sunshine and harvest, in whom is all wisdom, goodness and truth. This same God, on hearing you promise yourself to him threw both arms around you this day and embraces you as the dearest son or daughter from whom he has longed, yearned to hear those words.

I challenge you to discover this God who is capable of so much. Who can transform your life, who can help you steer through its biggest and its smallest torments. Who can cleanse us of the debilitating guilt that sometimes wrecks our sense of self-worth when we have sinned against another, against God's best hope for us, or against ourselves. I challenge you to try to look at the world through God's eye, a clear, a moral, a just eye.

God is not trivial or irrelevant. It is we who make God trivial and irrelevant by assuming that we can do all things on our own, or that we don't need God. Saying we can get along fine without God is like the body saying it can get along fine without its genetic code. We may not see it or understand it, but your genes are as real as their creator.

Saying yes to God, as you young people did today, is saying yes to what God can do, might do as you continue to invite God into the fabric of your life. This day your yes said to God that you want life to be transformed, different, filled with the power of one who made a billion suns and set them on their ordered paths. Then gave you the life force that stirs your creativity, passion, compassion and

love.

Take time to search God out, like a telescope searching out that hint of a distant planet around a distant sun, and you will discover one so vast, so powerful, so ageless, and so intimately near as to take your breath away.

Amen.