

SERMON  
 First Lutheran Church  
 Aitkin, Minnesota

Matthew 14:13-21  
 Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen  
 August 3, 2014

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE – "The Grandpa Tree"

### ADULT MESSAGE

Please take a glance up at the screens. You're looking at a photo of **stewardship**. No. You're looking at a photo of my son and daughter-in-law, **John and Maisi Pedersen**, our brand new, first grandchild, **Anders John Pedersen**, and our grand dog, **Charly Pedersen** (named after my father.) **But** you are also looking at a photo of "**stewardship**."

Our son and daughter-in-law have been entrusted by God with the stewardship of tiny Anders, their son. Someone once said, "**Stewardship is everything that we do once we say 'I believe.'**" For a follower of Jesus, **stewardship** is the name given to **our calling to love and care for ourselves, our possessions, other people and the whole world.**

John and Maisi have been given the call to love and care for little Anders. They have the responsibility to raise a helpless little bundle of life into a positive member of this world and of God's family. They also have taken on the responsibility to maintain and to grow their marriage relationship. They also have the responsibility to do good work on their jobs, in their community and even around the world. **Stewardship** – caring for what God has given us – **caring for everything God has given to us.**

Thirty-four years ago, it was my wife Jennifer and I who were holding our little bundle John. It was our responsibility to love and care for him and to let him know that God loves him even more than we do. Now I am a **grandpa to little Anders** and I am a **brother in Christ** and a **neighbor to you – stewardship...**

This congregation has a raft of children who have been touched, claimed and made new by these baptismal waters. Some are often seen here amongst us. Some have never been brought back by their parents. **They are all our children either way.** Think about the young moms and dads of our day. We have **single parent families.** We have **blended families.** We have **non-custodial parents.** We have **grandparents raising their**

**grandkids**. And we have “**traditional**” two parents, first-time married families. This last group is no longer the majority in our land... We have kids, no matter what their family situation, **growing up in such an uncertain and sometimes frightening world**. This is not totally unlike the days when Jesus walked this earth in human flesh...

This past week, our Men’s Friday Breakfast/Bible Study Group got to talking about **divorce**. We were reading Jesus’ teaching about divorce from **Matthew 5:31-32**. Jesus was critical of how easy it was for men to divorce their wives in that day. They could **dump their wife for any reason**. The women, on the other hand, could only get a divorce if their husband committed adultery. Our group consisted of men age 40-90+. When most of them grew up, few people had experienced a divorce in their family. Today the number hovers around a 50% divorce rate.

In my experience:

- Every couple that I have ever married planned to stay married together until they died.
- In recent years often both wedding partners have experienced the break-up of their own parents’ marriage.
- Many are not getting married until very late for fear of divorce.
- We live in a **throw-away society** where **powerful commitment, hard work** on the relationship and **counting upon God’s support** are not always found in both spouses.
- Both need to be working hard on the relationship...

We live in a world that is very tough on marriages and families...

Jesus and the people of our Gospel text lived in that kind of a world too. Divorce was easy. There were no government support systems. They lived in a land occupied by enemy soldiers. Most of the people were living right on the edge of hunger every day. So, when Jesus started his preaching, teaching and healing ministry, they flocked to see and hear him. **They were looking for hope.**

Jesus had just learned that **King Herod** had beheaded Jesus’ cousin, **John the Baptist**. John’s head was delivered to Herod’s **ritzy banquet** on a platter for all to see. How gruesome, repulsive and sick. This took place in the midst of the **opulence of the few**. Both the political and the religious leaders of the day had abandoned their responsibility to look out for the people entrusted into their care. The vast majority of people were longing

for a hopeful word. Does that sound at all like today? Jesus, no doubt **overwhelmed with grief, painfully disappointed** with our world and just plain **exhausted**, snuck away to try and be renewed by time alone with God. The crowds of people got wind of where Jesus went and they flocked to him again. When he saw the crowds, despite the death of John and despite his own impending death on the cross, Jesus chose hope and not despair. Jesus welcomed those seekers with hopeful words of promise for people starved for good news, peace and security.

This brings us to God's provision for life and our use of it. After a day of teaching and healing out in the wilderness, supper time came and Jesus' disciples told him to send the people away to find their own supper. Here's how Jesus cared for those folks:

- Jesus had compassion on the crowd.
- Jesus neglected his own needs to help them with their needs.
- He healed their sick.
- He preached Good News to them.
- He gave them hope.
- And when they were hungry, Jesus fed them.

How did that happen?

When supper time came and the disciples wanted to send hungry people away, Jesus said, "**They need not go away; you give them something to eat.**" The fellows replied, "**We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.**" And Jesus said, "**Bring them here to me.**" Jesus knew how hungry those people were.

"**You feed them.**" Jesus tells his followers not just to "**see the problems**" but to "**be the way that God will solve them.**" God is all about feeding hungry people – always has been and always will be. "**Bring (the fish and loaves) here to me.**" When we trust what we have into God's hands, amazing things start to happen. We need to trust **both our struggles and our joys** into God's hands. God is there anyway; we just forget that and rarely expect enough. In a day of scarcity, Jesus took the loaves and fish from the disciples, "**looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled...**" and they had lots of leftovers!

What happened?

- Jesus **honored the disciples** by letting them do the feeding. Use

- what I've given you to feed others... **God's work. Our hands.**
- **Crowds gathered** – there is no shortage of folks seeking hope.
  - **All were fed** – **All** is a favorite word for how God cares for people.
  - They **ate and were filled** – more than enough for them.
  - **Leftovers** – even some to pass along to other hungry people...
  - **The little bit that they had/ we have** becomes abundance in God's hands! **Do you believe that yet? Have you seen it?**

What can we do to support and encourage the young people, couples and families here in our faith family? What can our church do for these young people living here in Aitkin? Our guys on Friday morning suggested that maybe those of us who have experienced some of life's struggles and challenges could offer **wise counsel on how we got through**. Maybe we should try to offer more **low cost events** where folks can rub shoulders with peers and with grandparent types. Maybe we could **personally invite** them to worship. Maybe we could help **staff the nursery**, donate **camperships**, **teach** Sunday school, ask young people to **join us at fellowship time**. We need a couple of **Sunday school superintendants**. Does God have you in mind? We have hired **Pastor Melissa** to come and lead us in ministry to and with children, youth and families. The **money** you put in the plate helps to support of all of these ways to strengthen young people and families. **Thank you.**

**Our human view of the world** is often one of **scarcity**, limited supply. We believe in a world where we are **on our own** and its **every man for himself**. **God's view of the world** is **abundance**, unlimited supply. **God is for us** and that sets us free to be **every man for his neighbor**. Which world do you want to live in? Are you hungry for a hopeful word, some good news, some security in your daily life and family?

Turn to God. When you are:

- Short on patience with your kids or spouse,
- Short on time for all of your responsibilities,
- Too depressed to even see a light at the end of the tunnel,
- Running on empty physically, emotionally and spiritually,
- Too tired or frazzled to pray, let alone make it to worship.

Give **yourself**, your **family**, your **stuff**, your **struggles**, your **hopes and dreams** to **God** who is **already with you in all of it anyway...**

Turn to God. When you:

- Are thankful for all the good gifts you have in your life.
- Have seen God bless you in so many ways.
- Want to make a Godly difference in someone else's life.

**John and Maisi Pedersen** and little **Anders** working to be a family, trusting children of God – **that's doing stewardship**.

Thank you for your stewardship (love and care) for your **family and friends**, this **faith family**, the **children of this place**, the **families of this place** and the **people of this world**.

This week, watch for times and places where **God is able to turn apparent scarcity into abundant blessing** in your life and world.

Prayer:

You, Lord, are so generous with us and with our world. Help us to witness your abundance in our crazy, busy world. And help us to share your abundance where you see fit. Thanks be to God. Amen.