

In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, <sup>2</sup>“I have compassion for the crowd because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup>If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance.” <sup>4</sup>His disciples replied, “How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?” <sup>5</sup>He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” <sup>6</sup>Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the crowd. <sup>7</sup>They had also a few small fish, and after blessing them he ordered that these, too, should be distributed. <sup>8</sup>They ate and were filled, and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. <sup>9</sup>Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. <sup>10</sup>And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

<sup>11</sup>The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him. <sup>12</sup>And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.” <sup>13</sup>And he left them, and getting into the boat again he went across to the other side.

We all have things in our lives that we can't get enough of, right? Like we could listen to this album over and over or eat that comfort food and never get sick of it. For me, I never get enough reading time with my kids. Reading with them is my very favorite thing to do. I love doing silly voices and the joy of hearing the twins tell the story along with me, not because they're reading but because they've memorized the book. I love hearing Sara read. Over the summer, she's switched from young reader's books to chapter books, and she's devouring them at this point. It's the best. I can't get enough of it.

Last Sunday, right before Marsha Kay's mom went home, she made a massive bowl of tapioca pudding and an apple pie. Let's just say that I have no self-control when it comes to Grandma's desserts. I can't get enough.

And you all were absolutely, 100% right. September is the best. I would love a year full of Rhode Island Septembers, and now the leaves are changing colors. It's going to stay this way for the rest of the year, right?

What else can I not get enough of? Well, I'm glad you asked! I can't get enough of my son's hugs. He is so affectionate. And I can't get enough Tres Leches cake. It's my favorite cake. And hiking. And puzzles – jigsaw puzzles, logic puzzles, number puzzles, sudoku, crosswords, why this church has trustees and elders, all kinds of puzzles.

And this weekend, I got to experience my first Dunn's Corners Community Church Women's Retreat. I can't get enough laughter with my new family of faith. Between the Pictionary and the Magnets and even the sacrament of communion, it was a riot.

There're so many things that I can't get enough of. But what about you? What are some things that you can't get enough of? (Handbells? Artichoke dip? Sunrises on the beach?)

In today's passage, the people hadn't gotten enough of Jesus' miracles. Miracles are like ice cream, right? There's always room for more. Our passage in Mark 8 today is not the first time Jesus feeds thousands of people. He did it in Mark 6, too. Check your pew Bibles if you don't believe me. That first feeding is commonly known as the feeding of the five thousand, but let's not kid ourselves. Those were just the men. There were thousands upon thousands of women there, too. I think we should call it the feeding of the five thousand men and so many women and children they couldn't count them, but that's a long miracle title.

Then, that night, immediately after the miracle in chapter six, when the baskets of leftovers had been gathered up and everyone had headed home, Jesus walked on water.

Pretty awesome, right? But he wasn't done. At the end of chapter six, we hear that "wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed."

All who touched him were healed. Too many stories to name. Then he showed his power even further. A woman came to him and asked for healing for her daughter, who was back at the house. He healed her from a distance, and then he healed a deaf man. He was on a roll. You get a miracle, and you get a miracle! Everybody gets a miracle!

After three days of healings and interactions with many people, Jesus calls his disciples and says to them, "I care about these people. They've been hanging around for days and have run out of food. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way."

What they needed was food trucks. Thirty to forty food trucks that followed Jesus around like vendors at a county fair, selling fried food on a stick, would have done the trick, but since there were none, Jesus sat them down again and feed thousands more with the same meager loaves and fish. Again. Same miracle, same elements, same thousands. We can't get enough of his miracles, but it makes you wonder why Mark copied and pasted the same story in chapter 8 as is in chapter 6. What's different about this one?

Well, it may not be obvious to us, but as similar as the feasts were, there was one major difference. The first feast took place in a primarily Jewish area. The second took place in a primarily Gentile area, and on this World Communion Sunday, with the familiar words being spoken of blessing bread and breaking it and passing it out to his disciples, we hear in Mark that the feast of the bread and the cup, the miraculous sacrament, is for everyone. The whole wide world. Jews and Gentiles. All of us. Invited to the feast.

And now the feast is celebrated in Korea and Cuba and India and Ethiopia and Ukraine and Argentina and the US. It's never enough. We might celebrate it weekly, monthly, or quarterly. We might call it transubstantiation or consubstantiation or symbolic, all depending on our denomination, but today we remember that no matter our differences,

we all celebrate this sacrament. It's our way of connecting with the global church. But no matter how often we receive the bread and cup, it's never going to be enough. We'll never say, "well, that's the last time we do that. Let's put the communion set in storage for safe keeping."

But here's the part of the passage that really caught my attention. Right after Jesus finishes feeding thousands, again, he is approached by a group of Pharisees, and they ask him for something that everyone else has been asking for. They want to see a miracle. They want to witness it themselves.

Now, some might sympathize with the Pharisees and say, why not, everyone else has gotten to see a miracle. At this point in Mark's gospel, Jesus has healed countless people, exorcized demons, cured paralysis, raised a girl back to life, restored a withered hand, calmed a storm, restored hearing to a deaf man, fed thousands of people on a limited budget twice over, and walked on water. And there were, therefore, tens of thousands of witnesses who could have, and probably did, testify to the Pharisees what they had seen.

But it's not enough for them. "Just give us a sign, Jesus. Right now. In front of *us*. Prove yourself."

It's never enough, is it?

I feel pretty sure that Jesus knew that nothing he said or did would convince them, so he says, "Nope. No sign for you. You don't get to demand anything of me."

I mean, tell me this. If Jesus had called down fire from heaven like Elijah, or parted the sea like Moses, or jumped into the mouth of a lion or a whale, then do you think the Pharisees would have fallen down on their knees and worshipped or do you think they'd still be as skeptical as a disbeliever at a magic show in Vegas.

Well, you know that had to be smoke and mirrors there. And that lady he sawed in half, that's two ladies in two boxes. And I'm sure those aren't real handcuffs.

There's always an excuse for a skeptic to remain a skeptic.

We didn't really land on the moon. That was Hollywood.

Your money doesn't really go to feed hungry people. I'm sure it's being used for drugs and alcohol.

Everyone coming over the southern border is dangerous.

It doesn't matter what you say anymore to try to prove your point. No statistics convince the heart. No experts change the mind. It's all about our gut feelings these days.

It reminds me of something I heard many years ago. In 2005, a young man named Stephen Colbert launched his own late night comedy news show called The Colbert Report, and in his very first episode, he introduced a new word to us. "Truthiness." He said, "it may not be a real word in the dictionary, but I don't trust dictionaries [or encyclopedias], I trust my gut."

Ironically, within 12 months, truthiness was added to the Webster Dictionary because it epitomized a cultural phenomenon that still plagues us today.

You see, truthiness is the belief that a particular idea or statement is true based on personal intuition or gut feelings, without regard to evidence, logic, intellectual examination, or facts. Truthiness can range from ignorant assertions of falsehoods to racial stereotypes or even propaganda intended to sway public opinion.

In an interview shortly after this word was introduced, Colbert said, "Truthiness is tearing apart our country, ... It used to be, everyone was entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts. But that's not the case anymore. Facts matter not at all. Perception is everything. It's certainty . . . [that what I believe is right despite all evidence to the contrary.]"

Colbert continued, "I really feel a dichotomy in the American populace. What is important? What you want to be true, or what is true?..."

Friends, this interview took place in 2006. How much more true is the epidemic of truthiness now? As a society, there has been a collapse of trust in science, medicine, journalists, government reports, the justice system, history books, elections, even, sometimes, we've lost trust in our loved ones if what they say is not aligned with what I feel is true in my gut.

For the Pharisees, no amount of healing, restored sight, multiplied loaves of bread, water walking, or demon exorcising would convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. He didn't look like them, act like them, talk like them, or care what they thought. And he knew it. He'd never be enough for them; in their guts, Jesus of Nazareth wasn't the Son of God.

But it's easy for us to bash the Pharisees from our cozy, twenty-first century, ivory towers, isn't it? So before we get too high and mighty, let's just do one more thing before we conclude. Let's think for a moment about our spiritual truthiness.

What do we believe in our gut, despite evidence to the contrary? Do we believe that Jesus has to perform the particular miracle we need before we fully believe in him? Or do we believe that other people will care for the poor and therefore we don't have to? Do we believe that we don't have the skills to lead? Do we believe that if the church knew our secrets, that we'd not be welcome anymore? Do we feel that we're unworthy of God's love? Perhaps Holy Spirit is trying over and over and over again to get a message to you that you are loved or that you are worthy of happiness, or that your authentic self is what's needed in this church community, but no matter how many times you hear it, it's never enough. You dismiss it and ignore it. It's just never enough to convince you.

If there's a voice inside you that's feeding you these doubts, then hear this - the good news is Jesus may have refused to perform a miracle for the Pharisees that day, but do you know what happened just a few verses later? He healed a blind man. No, the Pharisees weren't there to see it for themselves, but the miracles didn't stop for those who believed. So, take a leap of faith and believe the evidence, and the feeling in your gut, that the love of God is unconditionally, eternally, freely available to you. It will never run out, and you can never get enough, so tap into it and let it overflow through you to the world in need. Amen.