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SERMON – Mission Impossible

TEXT – Genesis 32:22-31; Matthew 14:13-21

I don't know about you but for me there have been times in my life when I didn't have a single problem or concern, times of great joy. I think of the day that I said: "I do" and married Diane. A day filled with love and confidence that a fulfilling and rewarding future was waiting for us. A day when there was no room in my mind or heart for anything negative. I remember also the days when my children were born, new life full of possibilities forged from the love of Diane and me.

But for me and perhaps many of you there have also been days of darkness. Times when all I could see were the ways in which I had fallen short. Days when the future seemed uncertain and I wondered what now? Times when bouts of depression threatened to overwhelm me. Times when it is difficult to see how God is at work in our lives. At times such as these we may like Jacob need to wrestle with God, expressing our frustration, questions, and even anger. If like Jacob we can be persistent and continue to be in dialog with God; we like Jacob can receive a blessing. We may emerge from our struggle bruised but blessed with the blessing of being strengthened, receiving guidance, and knowing we are loved. We may not know that blessing in an instant. In fact, the fullness of the blessing God grants us may not be apparent for months, years, or even generations. It is also true that God's blessings don't always come as a miraculous intervention. They may come in the form of an idea or a dream, in the person of other individuals through whom God blesses us, or being inspired us to use our resources to further the work of God's kingdom.

In today's Gospel lesson, we see Jesus responding to the needs of the multitude by taking what little the disciples have, blessing it, and using it to feed the over 5,000 people. When we are willing to give in a sacrificial way to the work of Jesus, he blesses it, and enables it to do far more than we can imagine. Don't we see a glimpse of that here at North Main Street United Methodist where in the midst of financial struggles you been willing to reach out to those in need and those efforts have been blessed.

Yet we find ourselves wondering why there is so much evil in the world and why so few seem to be interested in religion? I believe that God is at work in the world calling each of us to use as God intended the abundance of creation. If we were to use the resources of the earth as God intended there would be no hunger. If we would properly use the intellectual resources God has gifted us with cures for diseases could be found and made available to all. If we would allow love and forgiveness to replace hatred and violence, we could put an end to war and refugees. This all may seem to be a dream but it was a handful of followers of Jesus spread who began a movement that spread Jesus message throughout the world. A message of love that inspired Jesus' followers to: establish hospital, found universities, champion human rights, fed the hungry, resettle refugees, house the homeless, provide disaster relief, and establish centers for worship and mission wherever people gathered.

You can be a blessing, the answer to the prayers of another. If you would like to discuss any of this message further please don't hesitate to contact me. I welcome your comments, questions, criticism, and disagreements.