

ABUNDANCE: A MIRACLE

Mark 6: 30-44

Augsburg College Chapel
October 18, 2006

- It is fitting that our celebration of Augsburg College and my inauguration begin here, in the Hoversten Chapel – this is the heart of our college and the Word we hear in this sacred place is the foundation for our learning and living. We will consider over the next several days what we are calling the AGES of Imagination – this interesting combination of Paul Pribbenow and William Blake, through the lens of Phil Adamo (now that’s liberal arts for you!)
- And so it begins here in our chapel as we gather together to consider how abundance, generosity, engagement and service (AGES!) are not just concepts we talk about, not just tasks we take on, but a way of life together. How do we live the AGES of imagination? I want to suggest that our work together will take a miracle!
- And that miracle is found in a familiar story...”The feeding of the 5000”
- Allow me to lift out of this familiar story a few ideas that may not be apparent to those of us who have heard it again and again (Berry on “reading scripture out of doors”):
 - An aside on the need for rest and time alone
 - Set the scene
 - Role of disciples – just like us!
 - Send these people home – self-help
 - Throw money at the problem
 - Jesus’ response: collect the bread and fish, break into companies of 50 and 100, redistribute....feed the hungry
 - Here is the miracle – trust and personal attention means that people are willing to share what they heretofore were hiding for themselves
- This is the promise of abundance in a world of scarcity – this is the promise into which we are called as God’s people in this place – this is the promise of grace and hope and peace that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord
- Think about what this promise means to our lives of faith and discipleship as we come together as God’s people in this place:
 - The abundance of our lives – We must face our own fears, our own anxieties that come when we look at the world as a scarce existence. The abundance of God’s people – what are you hiding because it is hard to trust and believe? What must we do to accept God’s gifts, God’s promise, God’s abundant and awesome love? [Don Warren and Step-Up; Bruce and our students who care for the campus grounds in the summer]
 - The abundance of this place – I have been so very struck with the remarkable stories of Augsburg as an institution and community in this neighborhood, city and world. By our firm resolve to settle in this neighborhood, by sending our students out into the world as educated and faithful citizens, by our vigilance and stewardship of our environment, by our willingness to embrace hospitality and generosity for our fellow humans – in

each of these ways we are practicing abundance here and now [Trinity and Bethany Lutheran congregations; connections to arts organizations like VocalEssence, Jungle Theater, Jeune Lune and Red Eye Collaboration]

- The abundance of the promise – what does it mean to be a community of abundance in a world of scarcity? Here we are dedicated to collaboration, to doing things differently, to working together to meet the needs of students and neighbors Where others say there is not enough, we say there is more than plenty if we believe and bring resolve and courage and imagination to our efforts to educate, to feed the hungry, clothe the poor, meet the needs of strangers.... Right here in Cedar-Riverside, in Minneapolis, in a community and society that can't get beyond the world's scarcity questions – a community that needs a miracle. [A community reading room in the new Oren Gateway Center]
- For me, abundance is a way of life that offers the firm persuasion that we can move mountains here at Augsburg College and beyond. Over the next couple of days I hope you will take one of the “mountain” cards and write on it your ideas about abundance, generosity, engagement and service. We'd like to collect all those cards and then draw a map for our future together as a faithful community of abundant learning and living!
- And so today, we are offered a miracle – the miracle of God's abundance – that calls us to a life as part of this faithful community. Are we willing to let this miracle happen here? Are we ready to accept God's promise for ourselves, this college and our community? God calls us. And our answer must be: Here I am, Lord – I return to you what has been so graciously given to me – and thereby I live with the sure and confident faith in life abundant. What a miracle. Thanks be to God. Amen.