

**August 6, 2017 Manor Road United Church –
Summer Sermon by: Susan Johnson, Congregational Member**

“No way.” “We can’t do it.” “We don’t have enough people/time/money...” We all know this, right? Boy, do we know it. That must have been what the disciples were thinking when Christ told them, “Feed the crowd.” Of course, Christ **could** have fed them; but at the time the disciples didn’t think of that. All they could see were the loaves and fishes. All they could think of was what they didn’t have.

We all focus on what we don’t have; that’s what our economy is based on. Over and over we’re told, “Don’t just have this, have that as well.” And we all think that if we had more money, more time, all would be well. But a financial advisor once said, “If you think that money is the answer, chances are money isn’t the problem.” It’s how we use that money. And if we think about what we have, we also need to know how to use it.

Perhaps you remember a character named McGyver. He was someone who weekly got out of all kinds of traps. He had three things that let him do this: a Swiss Army knife, a roll of duct tape, and most importantly, a brain that focussed on what we had – and how it could be used. Like using chocolate to stop a sulphuric acid leak, or chewing gum and foil to repair a fuse, or using a map as a sled. You can find whole lists of his feats on the internet,

Getting back to the disciples – they were being tested. Christ knew he could feed the people – after all, he was the son of God. The God who had provided manna and water in the desert for the children of Israel and for Elijah and the widow who lacked food, and made one night’s worth of oil last for eight – THAT God. But did the disciples believe in Him? Clearly not. All they could see was what they didn’t have – enough food. Yet just In a few chapters earlier, in Matthew 6, Christ had told them not to worry about what they would eat, or drink, or wear, since the God that cared for the flowers and birds would care for them also. Isaiah too tells us to come and drink, whether we have money or not, because God has promised this. And the psalm agrees: You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing. But at the time, the disciples just didn’t get it.

We too have trouble believing in God’s power, but part of that is the fact that we tend to treat God as a vending machine: put in a prayer, get what you want. But God doesn’t act like that. He acts more like the line from the Rolling Stones: “You can’t always get what you want/But if you try sometimes well you just might find You get what you need.” There is this story:

A fellow was stuck on his rooftop in a flood. He was praying to God for help.

Soon a man in a rowboat came by and the fellow shouted to the man on the roof, "Jump in, I can save you."

The stranded fellow shouted back, "No, it's OK, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me."

So, the rowboat went on.

Then a motorboat came by. "The fellow in the motorboat shouted, "Jump in, I can save you."

To this the stranded man said, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith."

So, the motorboat went on.

Then a helicopter came by and the pilot shouted down, "Grab this rope and I will lift you to safety."

To this the stranded man again replied, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith."

So, the helicopter reluctantly flew away.

Soon the water rose above the rooftop and the man drowned. He went to Heaven. He finally got his chance to discuss this whole situation with God, at which point he exclaimed, "I had faith in you but you didn't save me, you let me drown. I don't understand why!"

To this God replied, "I sent you a rowboat and a motorboat and a helicopter, what more did you expect?"

God will give us what we need, but not the way we imagine it. In hard times, He doesn't keep the bad things from happening, He gives us strength to deal with it. He gives us people who can provide support – even if they might not be the people we want. Like MacGyver, we have to look at our situation and see what there is. And then we have to believe, not only in God, but in ourselves. We are, after all, God's creation and we were given the tools to shape our lives, even if it doesn't always feel that way. Look around at what you have.