

Matthew 14:13-21

9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Prophet 13)

August 2, 2020—Shepherd of the Mountains, Pinetop, AZ

INI

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, “you do it!” That command, that imperative got stuck in my head. It wouldn’t go away. “You do it.”

We’ve all heard it before. From little children. In a classroom when the kids have given up on trying to work out a problem on the worksheet or the board. “You give me the answer.” In the home as siblings argue over chores. “It’s not fair. It’s not my turn. I did it last time.”

It comes from us grownups too. We’ve all said it before. When someone else doesn’t want or we ourselves don’t want to do something. You do it. “I took out the trash last time.” “I *just* unloaded the dishwasher.” “But, I’ve had a long day at work.” Or *in* the workplace... “Here, this is *your* assignment” as we hand a task given *to us* to a subordinate. “I don’t have time for it right now.” You do it. We hear it, and in various ways we say it.

Sometimes it’s not so bad though. Sometimes it sounds nice. Sometimes it’s out of care for the wants and desires of a loved one. “Where do you want to go for supper on date night this week? You pick.” “Anything in the store you want. It’s *your* birthday!” or “Here, I got you this gift card.” You choose. And even though the main force behind the words often is love in situations similar to these, there is still a hint of “I don’t want to. You do it.” “I don’t want to make the wrong choice” or “I don’t want to get the wrong thing only for you to not like it.” You do it.

I think one of the *best* ways we say it is when we are teaching someone, helping them to understand or build up a skill. Usually it’s with children. Typically, it’s with an encouraging tone. “See? Ok, now you try. You’re almost there. I think you’ve got it. Now, you do it on your own.”

And then of course, there is there is the reason these words got stuck in my head—our Gospel reading for this morning. Jesus has just heard the news of John’s death. You know: no one greater than, the Elijah who is to come, the sight to be seen in the desert, the baby leaping in the womb, Jesus’ friend and cousin, that John. John has just had his head separated from his body and won’t be *doing* anymore, at least on this side of the resurrection.

Jesus has heard the sad news and goes off with His disciples to a desolate place, to pray, to spend time with His disciples, to mourn and process...because Jesus in both His humanity *and* His divinity is *not* OK with death. It’s not His desire for anyone.

But the crowds saw the direction the boat was going. They ran along the shore to meet Him when He made land again. Carrying and helping their sick and wounded along, they were determined to follow Him wherever He went. They wouldn’t leave Him alone. It’s understandable though. Imagine that if Summit Healthcare put out an ad saying that they had a 100% cure rate for cancer, or 100% pain free and side effect free surgeries. People would flock in from hundreds of miles away. There would be thousands of people surrounding their campus just waiting to get in. That’s what’s happening here with the crowds and Jesus. Some may have been so moved by His previous teachings that they needed to hear more. But most people were probably longing for that miracle cure. And Jesus, having compassion on them, being moved to His inner being with care and concern for them, graciously heals them.

And then, it comes. “You do it.” But it’s the wrong kind. They should have known better. They should have believed. But no. “*You* do it, Jesus. You *make them* go and do it for themselves” And Jesus, in reply, flips it around. “You do it. *You* give them something to eat.”

Does Jesus just not want to? Is He too exhausted? Their day is far spent. He has been teaching large crowds. Or is He too focused on the death of His cousin? Too weak from sorrow? No, when Jesus says it, it is eye opening, ear opening, soul opening. His “you do it” only underscores the disciples’ inability. And then Jesus does it.

He takes the five loaves and the two fish. He looks up into the heavens and says a blessing. Perhaps a traditional Jewish blessing such as in the Psalm appointed for today and still used in many Christian

households. "Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His steadfast love endures forever."

Psalm 136

And then Jesus does what the disciples couldn't have done, what even the crowds probably couldn't have done for themselves, as there were no supermarkets. The vendors on the streets would have been overwhelmed if thousands suddenly descended upon them to grab a quick bite before going back out to Jesus. 5,000 men, plus women and children. Jesus had done it. Following the Father's will for Jesus to serve not be served, He had fed them all.

But what about the other times when Jesus says "you do it?" "You must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength." "You must love your neighbor as yourself." "You must take up your cross?" What about all these and all the other "you do it" commands?

Most of the time we're left scratching our heads, much like the disciples had been. We don't have the means to do it. We don't have the resources, either physical or spiritual. Again, when Jesus says it, it is eye opening, ear opening, soul opening. His "you do it" only underscores our inability. It shows all the times we haven't. It highlights all the times we should have.

And then Satan comes along and says, "you do it. Give up trying. God won't really care. Do the thing." And then his words become even more vile. "It's your turn. Curse God and join me. Judgment awaits you, after all. Do it. I'll make you a prince, even a king, if you will just bow down and worship me unlike that One who refused to. Accept your fate and take up your reward in hell."

But in the distance Jesus is once again speaking up into the heavens, speaking to His Father. "Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done. I will do it." And then He did it Himself.

And still He tells us. "You do it," but His command is a gracious command. His imperative is a Gospel imperative.

"You do it. You set your sins aside right there. I'll carry them because they are too much for you. And you do this also. When you see Me lifted up, you look up here. You take in the sight of my hands and feet and side pouring out blood for you. Gaze upon them and see that I am doing it."

And then again, a little later, in an encouraging and reassuring tone. "You do it. You look once more upon my hands and feet and side. I have done it. It is I. Do not...be afraid."

And from these words of comfort and relief and hope spring forth His constant invitation. "you do it. You let me make you sit down on the grass to be fed. You let me make you lie down beside still waters. You be passive when you come to the waters. I'll do all the work. I've done all the work. You be passive while I prepare this feast for you. You come drink. You come eat. You buy wine and buy milk. You pay for it, but, here, take this. Put it upon your forehead and your heart. It's my cross. That covers the bill."

And then He gives you a little wink as He says, "while you're waiting for your table, you continue to do it." And we understand from the wink that He really means that He will continue to do it as He sends His Holy Spirit to work in us, making us able to do it—to believe, to love, to forgive, to serve, to sacrifice.

The disciples eventually did it. It took a lot of work. There was a lot of head scratching along the way. But bearing the gifts that Jesus gave, they participated in His gracious activity. They distributed the food to the crowds. It was Jesus' work done in and through them. And as they were led out by the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, it was also Jesus' work being done in and through them as they shared the Word of what He has done for not just 5,000 men plus women and children, but the gift He offers to everyone.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, now it is time for us to do it also. And there will still be head scratching along our way. So, we cry out "You do it, Lord," but we cry out in faith that says "let Your will be done among us." And we share His gifts with the crowds around us, trusting that there will be no condemnation for us in Christ for when we fail to do. And when we are weighed down by what we have done along the way that we never should have done, we return here where He continues to do, where He continues to give, where He continues to forgive.

You do it. Come to His table. Without money and without price. And receive the forgiveness that He has done and won for you. Amen.