

8/2/26
10th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from July 26th – August 1st

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: Glorious God, your generosity waters the world with goodness, and you cover creation with abundance. Awaken in us a hunger for the food that satisfies both body and spirit, and with this food fill all the starving world; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (Acts 27:21-26, 39-44; 28:1-10, 30-31) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Matthew 14:13-21

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What does Jesus do when he hears about the death of John the Baptist?
2. What was the disciples response to the crowd when it was getting late?
3. What actions does Jesus take with the five loaves and two fish before they are distributed?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When have you felt like what you have to offer wasn't enough?
2. Where have you experienced or witnessed abundance recently?
3. Where is Jesus inviting you to move from a mindset of scarcity to a mindset of abundance?

Memorize this verse: "Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds." (Matthew 14:19) Where have you experienced blessing recently?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

In the very first chapter of Matthew's gospel, we are told that Jesus is Emmanuel (God with us) so for the one who made the world out of nothing and created light from darkness, multiplying some food and loaves was no major feat. Jesus wasn't the only one living in the first century that people claimed was working wonders. Nor was he the only one people hailed as a messiah. He wasn't even the only one to claim to be the son of God (most of the Caesars did that). Neither Jesus nor his early followers imagined that stories about wondrous acts would convince people of Jesus' divine origins. Rather, the wonders Jesus performed were always signs of the character of the God whose presence Jesus bears.

Which brings us to the first of two miracles described in this story that are anything but pedestrian. The point isn't what Jesus does, but why. Because the character of the God Jesus reveals and represents is captured in a single word, "compassion." Matthew says that when Jesus saw the great crowd that had followed him, he had compassion on them. And so he healed their sick, tended their needs, and shared with them his presence. And then, when evening came and they found themselves without food, he fed them. In the first century, gods aren't normally supposed to care about people like the crowds. The gods of the ancient philosophers, for instance, were considered dispassionate. At the other end of the spectrum, the gods of the Greek and Roman empires were notorious for using humans as playthings and for ordering the world to their whims. At best, gods were supposed to take the side of the rich and powerful, to stand with people like Herod and his well-fed party guests, sanctioning their exploitation of the poor and even the bloody murder of a truth-teller like John. They were certainly not known for siding with the oppressed, the ordinary, the downtrodden, or the hungry. And yet that's what happens here, as Jesus renews, embodies, and fulfills the consistent call of the God of Israel to feed the hungry. Make no mistake, that was no minor endeavor, as what we now call "food scarcity" wasn't only known in the ancient world, it was rampant. And so the disciples' suggestion that these hordes of people go buy food isn't just unrealistic – they are, after all, out in a deserted place – it's ridiculous, as the folks making up these desperate crowds probably didn't have money to buy food in the first place. And so Jesus tells his disciples to get over their callous self-concern and feed the crowd themselves.

Which brings us to the second miracle of the story. Jesus uses the disciples, even when they would rather look after themselves, to tend the needs of these thousands of men, women, and children. Using words and actions foreshadowing the Last Supper, Matthew depicts what happens when you move from a worldview of scarcity – "we have nothing here but five loaves and fishes" – to one of abundance – "thank you, God, for these five loaves and fishes." Whatever their initial skepticism, or doubt, or self-preoccupation, the disciples are caught up in Jesus words of abundance and gratitude and distribute what they have and participate in the wonder and joy that "all ate and were filled." God used even these reluctant disciples to care for the poor and hungry that God loves so much. The real wonder of this story is that it continues: God still cares deeply and passionately for those who are most vulnerable – the poor, the immigrant, the hungry – and God continues to use us to care for them. A reminder that God is still with us and implores us to remind others of that same presence with them.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen