

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, July 24-30 (B) – John 6:1-21

The Choices of Discipleship: *Generous or Greedy?*

Focus Question: *How does the generosity of Jesus overflow to our generosity towards others?*

word of life

“Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also, the fish, as much as they wanted.” John 6:11 (NRSV)

Read John 6:1-21

The lectionary shifts from the Gospel of Mark to the Gospel of John during the next weeks. All four gospels include the story of Jesus feeding the 5000. If you have time, read through all four accounts of the story, looking for similarities and differences. (See Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17) Many of the details are the same in the four gospels. This must have been a well-known and often-told story by the early followers of Jesus.

Note in this passage and throughout John’s gospel the emphasis on signs. The crowd followed Jesus because they had seen the signs of his ministry. In John’s Gospel, Jesus went up the mountain and sat down with his disciples. From his viewpoint, Jesus saw the large crowd and was concerned about their well-being, including if they had adequate food.

1. *What is an example of when 5000 people might gather in your community? Imagine that size crowd.*
2. *What would it take to feed 5000?*

Jesus engaged Philip in a problem-solving discussion. Would Philip discern how these people might be fed? Would Philip look to Jesus and his power to solve the problem? Philip was caught up in the practical side of the solutions. There were just not enough funds. Andrew offered a suggestion. At least there was a young boy with five barley loaves and two fish. It didn’t sound like much, but then again, Jesus had done amazing signs.

3. *Would you have expected the loaves and fish to adequately feed 5000?*
4. *Describe the scene.*

Jesus requested the crowd to sit down. Then, Jesus began this meal with a similar ritual associated with Holy Communion. He took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed the bread among the hungry crowd.

5. *What happened?*

The people were fed and there were leftovers. Jesus was so generous in feeding the crowd, there was extravagant abundance. Imagine that degree of generosity. This miracle is yet another sign of the power of Jesus. The people were firmly convinced, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.” (John 6:14 NRSV) The crowd wanted him to be their king, but the time was not right. So he withdrew to the mountain by himself.

Later, after his disciples had left to cross the lake to Capernaum, Jesus came to the boat by walking across the water. The disciples were afraid, but Jesus assured them, “It is I, do not be afraid.” (John 6:20) Performing miracle after miracle, sign after sign, Jesus lived among them.

6. *As the disciples went to sleep that night, what might have gone through their minds?*

word among us

The lectionary lessons during the next few weeks are part of a long discourse using bread as a theme. To assist in our reflection, a communion hymn will be used as part of Word Among Us. The first hymn for our reflection is “Break Now the Bread of Life” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Hymn 235):

Break now the bread of life, dear Lord to me,
as once you broke the loaves beside the sea.
Beyond the sacred page I seek you, Lord; my spirit waits for you, O living Word.
(Verse 1)

It is amazing how lyrics can capture so much with so few words. Those who gathered by the sea had waited for Jesus to heal and teach them. Yet they came unprepared and were hungry. Their hunger was both physical and spiritual. Jesus described the people as sheep without a shepherd.

1. *As you think about this story of feeding of the 5000, where do you find yourself?*
2. *When have you felt like a sheep without a shepherd?*
3. *Do you still need a shepherd? When?*

The hymn “Break Now the Bread of Life” describes the inner search for peace and the affirmation of Jesus as the bread of life. The search can end. In Jesus, the searching soul finds peace.

Bless your own truth, dear Lord, to me, to me.
as when you blest the bread by Galilee.
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;
and I shall find my peace, my All in All! *(Verse 2)*

You are the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
your holy Word the truth that rescues me.
Give me to eat and live with you above;
teach me to love your truth, for you are love. *(Verse 3)*

Jesus not only fed the 5000, he provided leftovers. The powers of Jesus are staggering and generous. As we experience God’s grace and generosity, hopefully we are stirred to generous living. We who have been richly blessed have much to share with others.

4. *How have you been blessed during the past week?*
5. *How have you extended God’s gracious spirit to others?*
6. *How have you received the peace of Christ?*
7. *What difference has that peace made in your life?*

Prayer

Gracious and generous God, stir me to gracious and generous living. May my life reflect your love. Amen

Dig Deeper

Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17

last word

This week,
be generous in word and deed
to each person you meet.

