

PENTECOST 9  
ISAIAH 55:1-5  
ROMANS 9:1-5  
MATTHEW 14:13-21  
AUGUST 5, 6, 2017

YEAR A

One of the blessed parts of coming to the communion table is that we come because we were invited. Jesus invites us to come to the table to be nourished with this spiritual and heavenly food. We are not worthy to come but Jesus didn't say anything about being worthy. Jesus invites us to the table where we are fed with spiritual food. Isaiah says that we are to come to the waters and drink. We are invited to come to the table to eat and drink even if we have no money. Each of us is invited to come to church even if we don't have money for the offering. We are ministered to even if we can't pay for it. We come to the communion table. We eat and drink what the Lord provides. Holy Communion is a faith meal that says we receive the body and blood of Christ even as we receive bread and wine. We truly come without paying for it and we eat what the Lord puts before us but we do not pay the price. All are invited and welcome at the Lord's Table.

**Matthew 14:14 When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick**

Jesus heard the news of John's execution at the hands of Herod and he withdrew from there to grieve the death of his cousin and colleague in ministry. He withdrew so that he might remember but also to find a quiet place to reflect. Matthew tells us that as Jesus went ashore a great crowd of people met Jesus. They were people in need. They were people in need of a healing touch from Jesus. Although Jesus was grieving he had compassion. The grief of Jesus was real but so were the needs of those that came to Jesus. Grieving does not relieve us of the responsibility of caring for others. There is a time to step back and let others minister to us and a time for us to reflect on the lives we shared with our loved ones. Jesus shows that within that grieving there is also a need for compassion.

During the hours before my wife's funeral Bishop Hougen and I were walking and talking. As we walked we came near to my wife's casket where some of the church members had come to pay their respects. The bishop and I stopped at the casket to greet those that were coming. One of the ladies saw us and started to tell me about a procedure she was to have the next week. She told me about her ailment and what was to be done. I listened as she told me. I told her I would pray for her. The bishop, observing our conversation commented, "You always are the pastor, aren't you?"

Jesus had compassion on the people. He did not stop being Jesus even when a loved one died. He did not stop being the healer and the Savior even when he was grieving. I did not stop being a pastor even though my wife died and I was grieving. I did take a couple of weeks off from the congregation in order to deal with my own issues of grief. Even though I was away I continued to pray for the church and for its members. Jesus gives life and peace even when there are things we do not understand. He ministers to us so that we might minister to each other. Our Lord's compassion did not stop with providing healing for their bodies. Jesus also fed them with bread and fish.

**Matthew 14:16-18** Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup>They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." <sup>18</sup>And he said, "Bring them here to me."

The disciples asked Jesus to dismiss the crowds so that they may go and buy food for themselves. They were practical people that knew there would not be enough to feed so many people. There was not even enough food to share among the twelve much less the crowds of people. The twelve did what many of us would have done. They wanted to call it a day. They wanted Jesus to give the benediction to signal an end to what Jesus was doing and teaching. Jesus was not willing to send them away hungry. Jesus continued to minister to them.

The disciples were concerned about the amount of food they had and the amount they would need. Jesus did not ask about what they didn't have. He asked about what they did have. The initial thought was that they did not have enough. You and I can't do anything with something we do not have. Jesus does not ask us for something we don't have or to do something we can't do. Jesus does ask us for the things we do have and to share the abilities we possess.

Our congregation has many projects and ministries we are hoping to do. If you look at the list on the bulletin board you will see all of the things we would like to do. The list does not include the thought of calling Pastor Lynn. If you look at the list you will also see that each of those ministry ideas and projects will cost money and will take people to do the work. If you look at our financial report you will notice that we don't have lots of extra money sitting around. The Lord asks us to bring our resources to him. He asks us to allow God to bless what we have to give so that there is an abundance for ministry. We cannot do anything with what we don't have but God can do something with what we have to give whether it be our money or our time and talents.

**Matthew 14:19, 20** 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. <sup>20</sup>And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full.

Jesus directed his disciples to feed the people. The hour was late and the people had been with Jesus for many hours that day. Jesus ministered to the people with healing but they were hungry for food. Jesus knows that it is hard to do things when we are hungry. We encourage our kids to eat a good breakfast before we send them to school. Our kids may not learn what they were supposed to learn at school but they will have a better chance to pay attention and learn if they are not distracted with food. Jesus had been

ministering and teaching in various places, including his hometown. These past weeks we looked at some of the parables of the Lord as he taught the people about the kingdom of heaven. Many that heard those teachings also followed Jesus to the other side of the sea. They were there and Jesus fed them. It is interesting that Jesus did not call for a show of hands to discern who were truly disciples or who would continue to listen to his teachings. Jesus did not weed out those that might call for his crucifixion later. Jesus fed all that were there. He ministered to those that had a need and then he fed them.

We come to church and are fed with heavenly food. We gather to hear God's word read and sermons preached on those words. We come to the table for Holy Communion so that we might feast on the body and blood of Christ. We receive a little wafer of bread and a drop of wine but our Lord floods us and fills us. The blessings of God are overflowing. Jesus does not ask us what our plans are for later in the day of next week. Jesus offers us the blessings of life as we are filled with heavenly food. The Lord feeds us so that we will bear fruit of faith. Some will leave the church and the table and forget about the Lord until next week but Jesus continues to feed us. Jesus also did not take a census before deciding who would be fed. Jesus fed them all.

Jesus invites you to come and find rest but he also feeds you with heavenly and spiritual food. Receive what the Lord is giving and then share the gift of life with those you meet this week. AMEN