

August 6, 2017

Living the Sacramental Life

PRAYER

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

SERMON

I'd like for you to use your imagination for a few moments. Imagine what it would be like to be one of the disciples of Jesus. Imagine what it would be like to follow him, to walk with him, to hear his voice. And to share in the joy of his vision of God's gracious kingdom. Imagine the joys and blessings as well as the fear and trepidation of following Jesus. Being called to leave everything in your life behind. Your family, your friends, your job. Just to up and leave it all.

Walking by your side as you follow Jesus are Peter and Andrew and James and John. The fishermen who just dropped their nets and walked away when Jesus called them to follow. And Matthew the tax collector who left his lucrative business to follow the call of Jesus. Imagine what it would be like to be a disciple. Imagine how great that would be. But then again following Jesus is not all wonderfulness.

Jesus is always out there on the edge walking the hot, dusty roads of Galilee. Galilee is not the end of the world but you can see it from there. But then again, you're from Galilee so you are well acquainted with the heat and the dust and the people. You know this people who are so often forgotten by the rest of the nation. You also hear in Jesus's teaching him saying some things about upcoming persecutions. And you begin to get a taste of it as Jesus takes his message to the people.

Many of them embrace his message of God's gracious kingdom with open arms. But others, mostly the Scribes and the Pharisees, lock horns with Jesus. Now you take some of that rejection when Jesus goes to his own hometown of Nazareth, and there the people sneer at him. And then comes the terrifying news that John the Baptist has been beheaded. You can't help but wonder if this is an omen of things to come.

Now after having been on the road with Jesus for several long, hot, tiresome days. You are ready for a rest. And you understand when Jesus seeks to pull away from the crowds and have some time alone. Time alone, with the one he calls Abba. You understand all of that because of how much the people are asking of him. And even more you marvel at the intimacy of Jesus' relationship with the almighty God of Israel, the King of the Universe he calls Abba, Poppa, Father. But then your heart sinks as you see all these people coming to Jesus. And you stand in awe that despite his fatigue, Jesus welcomes them with open arms and begins curing their sick. Showing them the gracious love and mercy of God.

Now time flies when you're with Jesus, when he's teaching, when he's healing. And soon what seems like only minutes but actually is hours. The sun begins to set. You and the other disciples cast knowing looks to one another and then together you go to Jesus and pour in him to send the people away. So that they can go home and get something to eat. In actuality, you want them to go away so you can rest. But what you want and the mindset of Jesus are two different things. And then Jesus turns and looks you straight in the eye. And says, "Don't send them away, you feed them." As Jesus says that, you're stunned. And you stutter trying to collect your thoughts. "Jesus, there are over 5,000 people here and all we have is a small boy's lunch, five loaves and two fish."

Now the loaves and the fish that are described here are the breads like a few small biscuits. And the fish are about the size of sardines. So, we're talking about a young boy's lunch. And you tell Jesus we don't have enough to feed them all. Jesus says, "Bring the loaves and fishes to me and watch." And then he tells the people to sit down. As you watch Jesus looks up to heaven and then he blesses the loaves and the fishes. And he breaks them then he gives them to you to give to the people. And then you are simply amazed, awed that when everyone has eaten their fill and the leftovers are gathered together. There is more food leftover than what was there when you began. And in that moment, you and the other disciples learned an important kingdom lesson. God can do a lot with a little.

I invite you back into the present moment to reflect on that kingdom lesson the disciples learned that day and hopefully we learn as well. The feeding of the 5,000 is a paradigm of the sacramental life you and I are called to live as disciples of Jesus. The sacramental life is a life lived in the conscious and conscience presence of Jesus. It sees life as a gift from God that is an ebb and a flow. An ebb being between being drawn to Jesus to be fed by him and being sent into the world by Jesus to do his work with our hands. The sacramental life understands that we are fed by Jesus in order to go out into the world to feed the world with his love.

The sacramental life is also a paradigm of this life of faith. Notice the lack of faith of the disciples when Jesus asks them to feed the crowd. "Lord, we don't have enough, all we have is five little loaves and two small fish. We could never feed all these people with that." How often we are so like those disciples. Jesus gives us the call to go into the world to make his love known. And we say Lord we don't have enough resources. We don't have enough money to do all that you're calling us to do here and other ministries around the world.

How can we possibly support other ministries beyond on our walls when we struggle to support our work here? Brothers and sisters in Christ, what we lack, what we have too little of is not loaves and fishes or money as the case may be. What we lack, what we have too little of is faith. Faith and trust that God can do so much with the meager resources we have to offer.

A woman in my congregation in Branden shared a wonderful analogy. She said Jesus calls and equips us to go deep sea diving in the ocean of life to do the work of the kingdom. And after we put on all the diving gear, we timidly tip our toe in the water of the bathtub to pull out the drain. When will we learn that Jesus can do so much with the meager resources we have to offer if only we offer them in faith.

Assurance of this story in today's gospel and the kingdom lesson it teaches us, is that God can and will do great things throughout our lives if only we trust him to give us the fishes and loaves that are in our hands. God can and will do great things in and through our lives if we only trust him to take what we have to offer. To bless them, and to do great and marvelous things.

PRAYER

May that peace of God which passes all understanding; keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN