

**August 2, 2020 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Isaiah 55:1-5, Matthew 14:13-21**

**Before I read the gospel this morning, let me say a few words of introduction.**

Today our sermon is an I wonder, I notice sermon.

This is familiar to some and new to others.

Truth is, we've done this in the sanctuary and chapel at church, but we've never done this on Zoom and Livestream.

I'll share more about how this works in a bit.

For now, as you listen this first time to the Gospel,

listen with your curiosity piqued,

muse and wonder and notice.

After I've read the Gospel this first time,

I'll explain how this special kind of preaching works and how you can get more involved.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter:

-----READ whole gospel. -----

**So there you go, our gospel this morning.**

In an "I wonder, I notice" sermon, we're all preachers.

We're all called to engage the scripture.

You've heard me read the Gospel once already.

In a few minutes I'll read it again, slowly.

Your job is to interrupt me.

In the sanctuary I'd ask you to interrupt me verbally.

Here in this weird Zoom virtual world, you who are on Zoom,

interrupt using the chat line.

Interrupt by typing a phrase that begins either

"I wonder... (whatever you wonder)" or "I notice... whatever you notice."

Our assisting minister, Eric Ringham, will amplify all that comes through the chat.

He'll do the verbal interrupting on your behalf.

After he has spoken what is in the Zoom chat,

I'll continue reading the gospel until I'm interrupted again.

Today it may sound like this at the beginning,

**“Now when Jesus heard about the beheading of John the Baptist ...”**

I notice that Jesus has lost someone really important to him. Or...

I wonder how Jesus reacted to John’s death, his murder.

**Remember, only two rules...**

**1. There are no wrong answers**, let the Spirit lead us as a community.

You may feel like you don’t know enough, but really those can be the best interruptions.

Your job is to add your typed interruption in the chat... It only works if you do.

**2. Use the structure.**

Begin your typed interruption with I wonder... or I notice...

Ready? Give me a wave so I know we’re together.

Fingers ready to type? Heart and curiosity ready to be piqued?

God bless our wondering and our noticing.

-----READ SLOWLY-----

**Thank you!**

Let’s continue in this same spirit for a little longer.

If you haven’t had a chance to add what you notice or wonder, this is your time:

Still using the “I wonder, I notice” structure, still typing in the chat line on Zoom...

What else did you notice? What else did you wonder?

-----MORE-----

**Thank you! Let me offer a few things I found myself** wondering and noticing.

**First, I notice the politics of the time.**

Jesus has just been told that John the Baptist was killed, killed ostensibly at the hands of Herod,

in many ways killed for speaking the truth,

killed for being a prophet,

killed for pushing back against Herod and his power and Herod’s affair with his brother’s wife.

**I notice how the politics are at once big**—the threats posed by the coming reign of God—

and also deeply personal—about Herod’s affair, his poor choices,

about Jesus' grief for his compatriot. .

Processing all of that, grieving, living with his own trauma, Jesus heads for a deserted place.

**I wonder how often** politics feels to us both big and lofty, and also deeply personal.

**I wonder how we** make space to care for our spirits in these political times.

**Secondly, I notice how when Jesus sees the crowd he has compassion for them.**

The literal meaning of the Greek word for compassion is: to be moved in your gut.

I notice how compassion by its very nature for Jesus is embodied—it's not a head thing,

but a body thing, feeling it in his gut, responding with his hands, his heart.

I wonder if we allow ourselves this deep, gut-moving kind of compassion.

compassion for others, compassion for ourselves.

I wonder if it's because of Jesus' own grief, that he feels more intensely their pain, their need, their hunger.

**Finally, I notice how Jesus makes a space** for the disciples to participate in his compassion,

how he empowers them.

When they say, "This is all we have,"

Jesus says, "Well, use it. You give them something to eat."

I notice that miracle, that spark, that moment when one by one they begin to reach into their cloaks and pull

out what they've tucked away: the extra loaf of bread, the morsel of fish.

I notice their abundance, their bounty.

**These weeks as we prepare for Holy Communion I usually mention the "edgeless table of Christ".**

I love that image—Jesus' table has no edge.

This story reminds me of that edgeless table of Christ:

The feeding on the lakeshore so long ago,

The bounty that stretches from our communion tables, to our dinner tables.

from our food pantries, to our legislative decision tables,

where hunger can be ended if only we value abundance more than scarcity.

**Today, thank you for wondering, thank you for noticing,**

thank you for sharing this feast,

this bounty of grace,

even when we're spread apart. Amen.