

July 25, 2021 9th Sunday after Pentecost
Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope

2 Kings 4:42-44, Ephesians 3:14-21
John 6:1-14

Would you pray with me:

May the words of our lips,
the hunger of our hearts,
the typing of our fingers,
the exchange in this faithful community,
be acceptable in your sight, O God, our bread, our life. Amen

Grace and peace to you, beloved of Christ Jesus.

Today we begin a long stretch all based in John's Gospel.

Now, these last many weeks we've been reading from Mark's gospel,
slowly plodding through, story by story.

But for these five weeks in late summer,
in the wisdom of the lectionary gurus,
every third year,
we shift away from Mark
and dwell, deeply, week after week, in this 6th chapter of John.

We start off this week, hearing the story of Jesus feeding the 5000.

This is a Sunday School classic, a story so beloved that all four of the gospel accounts passed down
through the ages include this feeding in some form or fashion—all four.

In fact, this is one of just a few stories that shows up in every gospel.

Today we hear the sign, the narrative, the set up.

Then over the next 4 week we hear the discourse as Jesus uses this feeding story, this miracle sign,
to explain more and more how he is the Bread of Life... and what that means.

Today we use that "I wonder, I notice" technique to dig into this story.

Think of this as the prework, the base, for all the next weeks.

This style of interactive preaching is familiar to some of you and new to others.

And, it's adjusted when we do it on Zoom and live stream.

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

We're all called to engage the scripture.

You've heard the passage from John once already.

In a few minutes I'll read it again.

I'll read it slowly, very slowly.

Your job is to interrupt me.

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

Here in this weird 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)."

Zach will amplify all that comes through the Zoom chat.

He'll do the verbal interrupting on behalf of the writers.

We aren't able to amplify the YouTube comments but those using YouTube can certainly add comments
that some of the other YouTube users will see.

After Zach has interjected what is in the Zoom chat,

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

So today at the start, it may sound something like this:

"After Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee..."

I notice that Jesus has moved to a new location.

Or, *I wonder* how it's different on the other side of the sea?

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 role is to add your typed interruption in the chat... It only works if people do it.

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? God bless our wondering and our noticing.

READ John 6:1-14 SLOWLY...

Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.

A large crowd kept following him,
because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick.
Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples.

Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.

When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him,

Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?"

He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered him,

"Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,

"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish.

But what are they among so many people?"

Jesus said, "Make the people sit down."

Now there was a great deal of grass in the place;

so they sat down, about five thousand in all.

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.

When they were satisfied, he told his disciples,

"Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost."

So they gathered them up,

and from the fragments of the five barley loaves,

left by those who had eaten,

they filled twelve baskets.

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say,

"This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

[Lots of wondering and noticing add here.]

Thank you! Let's continue for a moment in this same spirit,
still using the "I wonder, I notice" structure, still typing in the chat line on Zoom...
What else do you notice? What else do you wonder?

[More added here...]

Your wondering, your noticing, they make this rich. Thank you.
Let me offer just few of my wondering-s and noticing-s.

I notice that for Jesus gathering matters.

He's not content to send the people off to fend for themselves—gathering, community, they matter.

I notice how this is set around the time of the Passover.

That's important:

When John pens this gospel,
he wants us to remember the daily provision of manna in the wilderness,
the liberation from slavery, from bondage,
to make these connections with Jesus acts.

I notice that there is enough.

When the disciples suggest otherwise, when we raise our eyebrows in skepticism, it's fear speaking.
With Jesus there is enough for everyone, and baskets to spare.
With all the uncertainty of these days, I'm loving how Jesus feeds them right now, right where they are.
That's what I need, that's what we need.

Let me close with a story, from a couple of years back, a late summer, not so different from this one,
when we were hearing five weeks of Bread readings.

That summer I had this incredible hunger for my community, my people, this small group of family friends.
I was yearning for time with them: the ease of conversation, the banter and laughter, the vulnerability and
depth of sharing.

I pray you have people like this in your life.

It was a spiritual hunger I felt, but it got me planning what I called the bread and wine party.

With beverages, yes, but more with crusty bread and olive oil, a dash of salt, and grated parmesan cheese (I'm making you hungry, right!).

That time together, sharing deeply: Jesus was there.

That yearning, that hunger, even now, looking back: it is palpable.

When I read today's passage and look toward the next four weeks,

I pray that this is an opportunity to be in touch with our yearning, our hunger,

and how it is that Jesus meets us,

feeding us with his very self,

freeing us from all that binds,

gathering us and sending us with bread and grace... enough for today.

Thanks be to God. Amen.