

June 18, 2023 3rd Sunday after Pentecost
Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope

Exodus 19:2-8a, Romans 5:1-5
Matthew 9:35—10:15

Grace and peace to you, beloved ones, sent ones, grace and peace. Amen.

I've been on the look-out for a good scripture passage for an I wonder, I notice sermon.

Juicy enough, a good story, things to unpack, curiosities, some tension,
elements that connect to our lived experience.

Now I had a nice sermon in mind for this morning...

But I love how you engage during I wonder, I notice,
How you go deeper.

So that's the direction we're headed today.

Some of you are familiar with this practice.

For others it's new.

Let me explain: today we all get "in" on the preaching!

You've heard the gospel read once already.

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

Your job is to interrupt me—and I mean it.

But don't just randomly interrupt, **interrupt using a phrase that begins either**

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

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

I'll repeat what you say so that it's amplified.

Also, if you are on Zoom, use the chat line.

Someone helping with tech will interject your wondering, your noticing.

After your holy interruption, someone else may jump in with something they wonder or notice,
or I'll continue until another interruption arises.

So today it may sound like this at the beginning,

"Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching..."

I wonder if was tired. I wonder what he was teaching.

I notice Jesus seems focused.

Remember, only two rules...

1. There are no wrong answers, let the Spirit lead us.

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

Your job is to engage.

2. Use the structure.

Begin with: I wonder... or I notice...

Ready? Are your voices ready? My name is Jen; what's your name?

[READ Matthew 9:35—10:15]

Thank you! It's such a cool thing to hear you wondering and noticing.

I have a secret hope that you'll go home today, or maybe eat lunch,

that you'll keep wondering, you'll keep noticing,

that you'll let yourself be imaginative and curious and moved as you hear these Bible stories.

that the Spirit will keep stirring, as she has her way with us.

Let me lift up just a couple things that I noticed preparing for today:

I notice Jesus' compassion.

The way he has compassion on the crowd.

I wonder what it looked like when Jesus looked at them with compassion.

Our world can be so jaded, so harsh.

I want to remember Jesus' compassion for the crowds,

because I want to believe he's that compassionate with you and with me.

I want to imagine the look in his eyes, the feel of his hand.

And when I'm feeling jaded, or critical, or scared,

I want to keep opening my heart and opting for compassion.

I notice how Jesus empowers them.

There's so much to do, the harvest is plentiful.

But Jesus doesn't do it all, rather he empowers others, and invites and sends them, sends us.

I notice how often Jesus stresses hospitality.

He's teaching the disciples to expect hospitality,

to use hospitality as the litmus test for engagement.

What was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah so long ago?

It was their lack of hospitality, the inhospitable, demeaning ways they treated the visitors.
Don't be like that, Jesus says, raising the expectations of the disciples,
but also subtly instructing the listeners about how it should be in God's reign. Hospitality.

Finally, I notice those disciples, the apostles, the sent ones: the little bit we know of them—
fishermen and a tax collector, brothers, sons, sometimes husbands, perhaps fathers.

I notice how common they are, surely with history and stories, mistakes and mishaps.

We know so little and yet I can imagine so much:

the tension this calling might have caused in their family,
the economic strains, the political strains,
the doubts and questions that bubbled up in their hearts.

A few weeks ago, I attended the graduation for PEASE Academy,

the sober, recovery high school with which we share a building, since the fall of 1989!

The graduation ceremony took place right here, in the sanctuary.

It felt like graduation: Bobby was at the organ, playing Pomp and Circumstance.

But it was so much more:

for these families never expected this road, they didn't expect the horrors of addiction,
the challenges of mental health, no one does.

The students and the families have been through the wringer, and with the village, they are surviving.

During the ceremony there's a time where each grad can address those present.

One said, to their family and the school: "You saved my life, that's something I'll always be thankful for."

Another thanked their parent "for the opportunity to live a real life and to love myself."

Their ceremony was profound and there weren't many dry eyes.

This morning we recognize these PEASE grads,,

and also those in Lutheran Campus Ministry,
and those grads in our own congregation.

Dear ones, preachers, God's treasures, thank you for adding your reflections today.

May the Spirit stir your imagination.

May Jesus' compassion keep you, and Jesus' love be poured into your heart.

May God meet you where you are, and take you where you need to go.

And, let the people say, Amen.