



(Food for thought: Gospel: John 6: 1-15)

“Practicing Eternity”

The story of the feeding of the five thousand is found twice each in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, once in Luke and once in John. In all these presentations Jesus takes the bread, breaks it, and gives it to the disciples. These same words are used at the Last Supper - words we hear repeated each time we celebrate the Eucharist. However, there is a particular focus in the Gospel of John. In John, Jesus has a tremendous compassion for the people whom he sees as hungry for the Word of God. This one chapter of the New Testament contains the deepest Eucharistic theology in scripture, the chapter of the Bread of Life.

In the Gospel of John, all of Jesus' acts are "signs" - sacraments that point to a deeper reality. Jesus sees our weaknesses, our tendencies towards selfishness, anger and pride and he understands how we long to become very different than we are. He sees our mortality and our longing for eternity. He sees the hungry crowd and moved with compassion, he rouses the disciples to their feet and he feeds thousands.

Jesus takes the loaves, gives thanks and distributes them to those reclining: friends, strangers, even enemies. John was reminding his community, and us, Remember who God is, a nourishing, strengthening, traveling companion who uses bread to draw people together to form a caring community, who in turn feeds the hungry and the needy.

People have good reason to feel hungry and afraid today. Poverty, racism, climate change, and so many other injustices are causing real suffering for much of the world. Only with faith do we have the ability to understand the reality of what is, and the possibility of what can be.

We are called and the same time we are sent forth. We are forgiven only to forgive others in the same way. We are fed, only to feed.



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