

## ***"Live in the Presence of Jesus the Christ"***

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Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Jesus tells us to rest; find that quiet place and reflect on what you have been given and know that you are a beloved child of our Creator.

Our scripture reading this morning is an interesting one in that it skirts around the feeding of the five thousand – you of course will remember the story of the five loaves and two fishes. This was not the only story that is passed on till another time – the story of Jesus walking on the water is set in another lectionary year as well. They would have actually been the scripture readings for 2018. The two sections we read today could reveal more about how Jesus goes about his mission. Mark has offered his fundamental idea of the coming of the kingdom of our Creator through Jesus the Christ. Perhaps we might find something about ourselves here today as well.

The background of this reading leads us to believe that it is spring. We know Herod was in power and had murdered John the Baptist at the request of his step daughter who had danced at his birthday celebrations. We know that Herod had taken his brother's wife as his own and John the Baptist had taken him to task over that fact.

The disciples had just come back from an arduous time of travel without Jesus, as two by two they went out to the country-side. They had been given the huge task to go out and preach and heal just as Jesus had done during the period

they had been together. Their travelling conditions and instructions were austere and to the point. It was up to them (and God's presence) to listen and hope that they could re-call all they had heard and been taught as they had moved around the country-side. They left as disciples and returned as apostles. This signified their new relationship with Jesus. Once Jesus had returned to the Creator all the earthly work would be left to them and now to us.

The apostles had been successful in all they did and returned to greet Jesus once again. They must have looked like the journey had put a considerable strain on them and Jesus would have known what they would have had gone through. He suggested that they needed some down time and get a chance to eat as they had neither time nor a possibility to relax. So, they travelled by boat up the western shore of the Sea of Galilee to find a deserted place to do just that. This short trip would be much easier and faster than going across the lake to the eastern side.

So much for getting away for a little rest from the crowds. As soon as they came to the area suspected to be deserted many of the crowd who had been searching for Jesus were already there. The one aspect that was quickly understood by Jesus was that they were seemingly a lost community. They gave the impression that they were "like sheep without a shepherd". Fred Craddock says this "they are not only drawn to Jesus, but they are driven by their own desperation." Unquote. And Jesus being who he was had compassion for them. And once more he did what he loved to do, "he began to teach them many things."

When we read that we might wonder why Jesus would not begin to change their lives by giving them things to live with. More food, more water, a better life style. That seems to be the solution in our world today. They might need more money to get that security for the family. We don't often see that teaching is part of the process of change that comes to our minds.

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When Jesus finished teaching those who had waited for him to arrive, they slipped into their small boat again and sailed across the Sea of Galilee to the eastern side the small town of Gennesaret. We read this "54When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, 55and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed."

Jesus knew what these crowds needed. Teaching was his first effort to pass on the good news of our Creator. Food would come later on and we know the story of how he would feed them. His vision of compassion was the one means that he knew would give the crowds just what would fill their hearts and minds. They would learn of God's love, the relationship needed to live and how creation came about.

The news of his teaching and healing obviously was something that drew them to him. They showed up in jam-packed crowds. They came from all around the country-side. He met them where they lived, where they shopped. They even believed that the only thing they had to do was touch the fringe of his clothing and they would be healed. This was all part of the teaching and healing that Jesus was known for through-out the world of that time. Though we know when Jesus got into a deeper conversation, that of his coming death and how each one should bear their own cross, they would soon lose their excitement in following him anywhere. Scott Hoezee commentator says this "Only those who really understand Jesus' teaching and learn it over the long haul see the sense of it all and find the joy and the new life of it all," unquote.

We know that many people in Israel in the time of Jesus heard of his healing miracles and followed him to hear him preach and teach. Tomas Long, minister and commentator wrote this about Jesus' miracles "the idea that if you focused only on the miracles—and if those miracles caused you to move too quickly toward Jesus—you would miss the depths of what Jesus is really all about, seizing only the surface of Jesus but failing to get at what really matters down in the deep places of the Gospel. To get at that takes time. Maybe that's why Jesus taught in parables—they slowed people down, puzzled them, made them think and ponder. And for some, maybe that was just long enough to understand, too." Unquote.

Earlier in Mark we know that many of Jesus' followers were excited about his teaching even more than the miracles he performed for the sick and the dying. We remember that four friends lowered their paralyzed friend through a hole in a roof top in Mark chapter 2 "3 Four men came to Jesus carrying a man who could not move his body. 4 These men could not get near Jesus because of so many people. They made a hole in the roof of the house over where Jesus stood. Then they let down the bed with the sick man on it." And we can understand that more than that miracle, Jesus declared that the man's sins were forgiven as well, a note that we can welcome today.

We have heard in many readings that Jesus believed that he was like a shepherd to the people that he met and taught, healed and preached his message to all who followed him. Jesus knew in his own readings of the Bible of that time the Tanakh, that prophets in the past had critiqued Israel's false leaders. In Ezekiel, we hear this statement against the false rulers of Israel "Speak in My name and tell those shepherds, 'The Lord God says, "It is bad for the shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool. You kill the fat sheep without feeding the flock. 4 You have not given strength to the weak ones. You have not healed the sick." Unquote. In our present reading we hear Jesus speak

about those who followed him seeking healing and love. He knew that he could be a shepherd that would do all that those rulers had not done in the past.”

Jesus the Christ came to feed his flock, strengthen the weak, heal the lame and sick and give his life for the world. He knew that the people he saw following him were without a shepherd and he had compassion for them. Elizabeth Webb commentator says this “The food for which the people hunger is the very word of God, and in so feeding them Jesus shows himself to be a shepherd “after [God’s] own heart,” feeding God’s people “with knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:15). What is more, he shows himself to be the divine shepherd, the very Son of God in whom the kingdom has come.” Unquote

We end with this from Elizabeth Webb again “By healing the sick, the weakest and most vulnerable members of a community, in this space, Jesus is subverting the economy of this world through the very inauguration of God’s kingdom economy. While the marketplaces of the world belong to the rich and powerful, in the kingdom of God this most political and commercial of spaces is occupied by those with the least. In the age to come, Jesus proclaims, “many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (Mark 10:31). That age is now breaking into this age; we who seek to live God’s kingdom here and now must follow Jesus’ subversion of worldly power and wealth.”

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Would you pray with me:

Gracious Creator, Let us rest in you, be our guide and strength. Help us in seeing you in each other. Help us to understand where we are in your creation, that we are your beloved children. Amen