

From Our Conference Minister

Blessed, Broken and given for Service! (Matthew 14:13-21)



After hearing the news that his cousin John the Baptist had been executed, Jesus withdrew to a deserted place. The crowds followed him and stayed there a long while listening to him preach and teach.

When the disciples realized it was getting late and the crowd of over 10,000 hungry people (men, women, children) had nothing to eat, they brought their concern to Jesus. The disciples' recommendation was for Jesus to send the crowd away to go to their homes and find food. This seemed reasonable since such a small group of disciples could not handle feeding such a large crowd. The disciples weren't being selfish or unkind. They were being compassionate by showing care for the multitude of hungry people.

Like the disciples, we want unmet needs to go away but Jesus tends to draw near to them. When Jesus looked at the crowd he responded with compassion, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." (v.16) Jesus changed the focus from what the disciples wanted to do, to what he wanted them to do.

"Bring them here to me," (v.18) Jesus told them. The disciples gave away everything they had, which was five (5) loaves and two (2) fish. In the face of such overwhelming need, it was not much but Jesus blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples for service to others.

After everyone had eaten, the disciples gathered 12 baskets of leftovers. When they trusted and followed Jesus they had more than they could have ever imagined.

It was a miracle and recorded as such in all four (4) gospels. However, Barbara Brown Taylor has a problem with miracles that "mesmerize" us because they tend to lead us to leave everything up to God. *"Miracles,"* she writes, *"let us off the hook. They appeal to the part of us that is all too happy to let God feed the crowd, save the world and do it all."* Taylor argues that God tells us, *"Not me but you; not my bread but yours; not sometime or somewhere else but right here and now...Stop waiting for food to fall from the sky and share what you have. Stop waiting for a miracle and participate in one instead."*

When Jesus gave bread to the disciples to feed the crowd, it was a foreshadowing of what can happen when we participate. As followers of Jesus, we too are called into active ministry to meet human needs.

May it be so.

In Christ,

Monica

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