

in the big love living liturgies

“You Feed Them” • Matthew 14:13-21 Worship Service for Home or Small Group Use

prepared by Rev. Kathryn M. Schreiber

Preparations

- You may wish to arrange to worship distantly with others at the same time.
- Read through this service before beginning, especially for items needed.
- A “Christ Candle” can be any sort of candle or object which represents Christ’s presence.
- Choose songs to sing (our suggestions or your favorites). Assemble what you’ll need to sing.
- Ensure an uninterrupted place to worship.
- Decorate the space to welcome God’s presence, as we do at church.

Time for Children

“Out of the Bag: Sharing” on YouTube channel: Kathryn Schreiber

Worship Service

Please adapt to make this worship service your own. Your intention is what is important.

We Gather

Invocation (unison)

Our spirits are in need of the Living Christ
for we have heard bad news.
We are in need of very Good News.
Come, Jesus, Come!

We are hurting and scared.
We need compassion and wisdom.
We need our Spiritual Leader.
Come, Jesus, Come!

We are sad that so many are ill and dying.
We worry our loved ones will become sick
and are concerned about our own health, too.
Holy Healer, we need Your help.
Come, Jesus, Come!

Light the Christ Candle

Song for Welcoming the Holy Spirit

Suggestions:

“Come to Me, O Weary Traveler” - S Dunstan, W Rowan; AUSTIN (#353 Chalice)

“Come unto Me, Ye Weary” - W. Dix, S Wesley; AURELIA (#191 Hymns of Life)

We Unburden

Naming Our New Reality

If you are with others in person or via devices please discuss your reaction to the rapid spread of COVID-19. Maybe you know someone who is ill or quarantined? If you are alone, speak out loud to God about this past week. Be honest. What has been hardest? What has been most surprising? What has been most uplifting? Name your truth no matter what it is. God is listening.

Silent Prayer

*In the quietude of your soul simply be in God's presence, just as you are.
Your mind will wander. Thoughts will come up.
Be kind to yourself. Temporarily let go of following your thoughts.
Sit in God's presence, possibly repeating "Holy One" or "Dear Abba."*

Act of Unburdening

Place pebbles or small items at the base of the Christ Candle thinking or speaking whatever you wish to offer to God for release. These "releases" need not be named. The soul knows what to give to God and God knows what to receive.

Blessing of Grace (unison)

Let us pray:

Before we uttered a word,
before we put a label on our discomfort
You, O Lord, knew what we were carrying
and called us forward to release
awaiting this moment
when You could fully unburden us.
Merciful One, Thank You. Thank You. Amen.

We Listen**Gospel Reading (responsive)**

Our scripture reading is from the Gospel of St Matthew 14:13-21 (NRSV). This story also appears in Mark 6:32-44, Luke: 9:10b-17, and John 6:1-15. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the miraculous feeding of the crowd takes place immediately following the execution of John the Baptist.

In Matthew 14:1-12 King Herod arrested John the Baptist for criticizing Herod's sexual affair with his sister-in-law Herodias. Herod imprisoned John and wanted to kill him, but the King feared backlash from the public. On Herod's birthday, his niece, Herodias' daughter, danced a very special dance. King Herod was so happy that he promised her anything. She asked for what her mother wanted -- the head of John the Baptist. The text says "the king was grieved" but Herod followed through anyway. He killed the prophet John. Keep this in mind as we read Matthew 14:13-21.

This passage contains an important conversation between Jesus and his disciples. The reading below is set up for a storyteller, the disciples, and Jesus. One person may read in different voices or multiple people may each read a part.

Storyteller:

Now when Jesus heard of the killing of John the Baptist,
he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.
But when the crowds heard about the killing of John the Baptist,
they followed Jesus on foot from the towns.

When Jesus went ashore, he saw a great crowd;
and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.

When it was evening, the disciples came to Jesus.

The disciples:

"This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late;
send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages
and buy food for themselves."

Jesus:

“They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”

The disciples:

“We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.”

Jesus:

“Bring them here to me.”

Storyteller:

Then Jesus ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish,
Jesus looked up to heaven,
and blessed and broke the loaves,
and gave them to the disciples,
and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

And all ate and were filled;
and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces,
twelve baskets full.

And those who ate were about five thousand men,
besides women and children.

May God add a blessing to the reading and reflecting upon this Holy Word. Amen.

Reflection Upon Fear, Need, and Resources

(If your pastor has prepared a sermon, please read/view it now.)

Let us try to imagine what it must have been like all those years ago... The followers of John the Baptist would have been in shock. Many thought him to be The Messiah. Others believed John's proclamation that Jesus was The Messiah. All must have wondered who else was in danger now that the King had cruelly killed John the Baptist. Might Jesus be killed, too? Might they? Many scared and sick people traveled on foot to find Jesus looking for comfort and healing.

Jesus had gone away by himself to grieve the death of John the Baptist. But he left his private place of prayer and saw the gathering crowd. Jesus put aside his personal sorrow and performed many acts of care and healing. As night approached, Jesus' disciples came to him asking him to tell the people to leave, to go to one of the nearby villages for food and lodging.

How does Jesus respond? He says: “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” Basically, Jesus says to his disciples: “You feed them.” The disciples are bewildered because they only have five loaves and the two fish. Do you think Jesus knew there was other food among them? Did Jesus know that the crowd also had extra food in their pockets, baskets, and bags? As Rev. William Sloan Coffin was fond of saying, “Resources weren't the problem. Distribution was.” Sound familiar?

It is predictable human behavior to hoard goods when we are afraid. All over the world scared people are stockpiling critical items for private use, maybe we are doing that, too? Given this COVID-19 pandemic, what do you think Jesus might say to us?

*Let this story lovingly trouble your soul. What might you have that is really needed right now? What might God be saying to you and your household?
(cont'd)*

*Listen to the sounds of nature or special music before moving on.
When your reflection time is done, simply say: "Amen."*

We Pray

Prayers of Petition

Lift up your joys and concerns in prayer. If your community shares prayer requests or a Pastoral Prayer, include them at this time.

Song for Prayer

Suggestions:

"Sweet Hour of Prayer" - W Walford, W Bradbury; SWEET HOUR (#570 Chalice; #427 HOL)

"Standing in the Need of Prayer" - African American spiritual; PENITENT (#579 Chalice)

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Imagine the sanctuary where you usually worship. Let the memory of your Beloved Community fill your soul and let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We Give Thanks

Offering

Do something to show your love of God. Offer words of adoration to the Ever-Giving One. Do something for someone others might be avoiding. Make a donation of time, talent, or treasure. (Please see the Donation note at the end of this document)

Song of Gratitude

Suggestions:

"Gloria Patri"- Doxology

"Great is Thy Faithfulness" - T Chisholm, W Runyan (#18 HOL; #86 Chalice)

We Continue in Hope

Affirmation of Plenty (unison)

Within the baskets of the crowd,
Within the pantries of our homes,
Within the corners of our hearts,
There is enough.

Among our global neighbors,
Among our friends and family,
Among our very household,
There is enough.

Sweet Ever-Living Jesus
Keep speaking to us saying:
"You feed them!"
And let us eagerly reply:
"We will!" Amen.

(cont'd)

Song of Hope

Suggestions:

“God of Grace and God of Glory” - H Fosdick, J Hughes; CWM RHONDDA (#464 Chalice)
 “We Are the World” - M Jackson & L Richie, 1985.

Benediction

Thérèse of Lisieux lived over 100 years ago in France. She was known as “The Little Flower of Jesus” because she encouraged Christians to live a life of simple, practical faith.

Thérèse wrote:

“Our Lord does not look so much
 at the greatness of our actions,
 or even at their difficulty,
 as at the love with which we do them.”

Dear Ones, this week may we do what we do with great love.
 Go forth in peace. Christ goes with us. Amen.

(this concludes the service)

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Online music: <https://hymnary.org/> YouTube: google by title AND one of the authors

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