



## You Cruise, You Lose – Touchpoint for July 24, 2024

### John 6:1-21 (NRSVUE) Feeding the Five Thousand

#### TOUCH POINT

<sup>6</sup> After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup> A large crowd kept following him because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. <sup>3</sup> Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. <sup>5</sup> When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” <sup>6</sup> He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” <sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, <sup>9</sup> “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” <sup>10</sup> Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place, so they sat down, about five thousand in all. <sup>11</sup> Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup> When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. <sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

<sup>15</sup> When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

#### Jesus Walks on the Water

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. <sup>18</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” <sup>21</sup> Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

#### Ephesians 3:14-19 (NRSVUE) Prayer for the Readers

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit <sup>17</sup> and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup> I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**Grace and peace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.**

What we have here are two stories, the first one beginning with Jesus feeding five thousand people with two sardines and five loaves of barley bread. Seriously?! According to some scholars, this is what was most likely served. Sardines were pickled to preserve them on one’s journey. Barley bread was for the poor; a very inexpensive bread and not the tastiest. I am a foodie but not a fishie. I’d like to see what Netflix’s artistic, eye pleasing show, *Chef’s Table* would do with this meal.

A few years ago, I wrote a piece on the feeding of the five thousand called, “Jesus Wins *Chopped Champion* with Two Ingredients!” It became a part of the curriculum for 30-day treatment and recovery facilities. It contains 10 principles that Jesus tells us in this story. It was so engrained in my mind that when I saw these were the suggested passages for today, I thought, “easy peasy.” I put my message preparation on cruise.

As I began writing, it felt like I was taking a walk in my own neighborhood. My turns were without much thought. Suddenly, I came to a dead end I hadn’t seen before, and I began to loop. Same streets, same houses and totally monotonous.

I had removed the last portion of scripture because it didn’t move MY story of the miracle of the loaves and fish along. I went back and read it. The disciples were getting in the boat and going back across the lake. They had to know Jesus was still in the mountains resting and praying. They had gone out nearly four miles.

Why did they leave? Jesus had made sure they got rest and solitude after their exhausting two by two ministry of healing. They participated in serving all those who were on the long journey for the Passover feast. They witnessed and were part of one of the biggest fish stories ever! They saw how taxed Jesus was and how his solitude was cut short upon their arrival on shore.

After everything was over... they left without him.

Had this phenomenon become normalized and monotonous for them?

Jesus came down from the mountain and they were not to be found. He never said get in a boat and go to the other side like before. They just left.

My questions started flooding in.

Were they afraid it was becoming too late, too dark and too dangerous to leave any later? Was it impulsiveness, thoughtlessness, miscommunication?

What was Jesus feeling? Hurt, anger, discouragement or rejection?

When he walked on the water to the boat, was he frustrated, not caring much if they would be afraid? I mean, he could have transported himself, couldn’t he? Nope, he arrived dramatically, walking on the water.

What does the walking on the water mean?

The disciples obviously did not expect this. But why not? Not one of them said, “Hey, maybe it’s Jesus!”

Four miles out, they became afraid of the wind. Perhaps they were traumatized by past storms where certain people were asleep. They knew they were safe when Jesus was with them; why didn’t they wait?

Maybe they had put their wisdom and Touchpoints on cruise. Maybe they got on the boat and sang Bob Marley songs, marveling about their past work when Jesus wasn’t with them.

But in those trips where they left alone, Jesus sent them. He appointed them to go love the world by healing bodies and souls. Jesus sent them to get in a boat and go to the other side.

What were they doing when they rested on the boat? Play UNO?

Perhaps Jesus had had it when he got to the boat and said, "It is I. Don't be afraid."

What would Jesus have wanted to say? I mean, after all John reports: "*Then* they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going" (John 6:21).

Ouch! "It's me. Don't be afraid." And then zoom, they're on land!

Maybe he would've wanted to say, "You want to get to the other side? Is that your only goal? Here ya go. Hold on! How'd you like that? What are you going to tell your kids when they ask you, "What was your favorite part of the boat ride, Daddy?"

They could have talked on the row back, reflected on all that occurred, cared for Jesus and asked him how he's doing. Received their participation ribbons, etc.

It could have been such an amazing journey back to shore if they just didn't try to go alone.

I'm sorry, I don't mean to sound glib, or maybe I do. I'm simply asking myself these same questions.

How many times have I gone off on my own expecting God to follow?

Maybe at times my intentions and goals are worthy ones. But places God had every intention of taking me. I just wanted it over, so zoom, there we are. No intimate travels with Spirit or others.

Maybe the sardines and bread were a way for Jesus to teach the disciples about love through service; teaching hospitality to the goal oriented. While others traveled to the Passover place, Jesus welcomed the holiness of the journey. Perhaps the fish and bread was communion with strangers.

I'm not sure, I just know olives would have been a bit more kind. But there I go again wanting to get to the other side of discomfort.

**Amen**

### **Ephesians 3:20-21 (NRSVUE) Prayer for the Readers**

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and<sup>[c]</sup> in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

## Opening Songs

### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be still, know that I am God

### **Spirit of the Loving God**

(Celtic Spirits)

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.  
Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me.

### **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

### **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

### **Come, Bring Your Burdens to God (Woza Nomthwalo Wakho)**

(John L. Bell, The Wild Goose Collection)

Swahili: Woza nomthwalo wakho,  
Woza nomthwalo wakho,  
Woza nomthwalo wakho, Uyes' akasozathi hayi.

Come, bring your burdens to God,  
come, bring your burdens to God,  
Come, bring your burdens to God for Jesus will never say no.

### **The Meal**

### **The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

### **Benediction**

### **Sevenfold Amen**

(Keith Duke)

Christ before me. Christ behind me.  
Christ above me. Christ below me.  
Christ to left and Christ to right.  
Christ within both day and night.