

Matthew 14: 13-21
August 3, 2014
Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church

During the past two weeks of forced inactivity I have rediscovered that not being able to *do* anything is hard work. To be inactive and to try to follow the loving advice to “take care of yourself” is no easy task. And yet I have discovered that being inactive is not *doing nothing*. It is in fact being forced to get out of the way so that *God can do something*. During this time of recuperation I have had plenty of time in between naps to read. And in the course of reading I have had the experience of God being present. It is as if this time of recovery has been very active; yet in a very different way. It has been a time to listen and to discover just how profoundly God is attentive. It also reminds me...again, that *activity*, while vitally important can get in the way of the call to simply be receptive to God’s love in Jesus Christ. As wonderful as it might be simply to rest in the arms of Jesus for several weeks, it need not take major surgery to create this opportunity. We are designed to be able to sit at Jesus’ feet every day. Whatever activity we engage in, it is designed to be the expression of our ongoing communion with God.

I begin this way because this episode in Jesus’ ministry sounds really different from the viewpoint of one who cannot *do* anything.

Under normal circumstances and operating under full strength this story hooks my experience of being a disciple. There is always more to do than can be done. What Jesus asks is impossible. In a world of disease, starvation, violence and oppression the miraculous feeding of a few thousand souls on a Galilean hillside is charming but hardly applicable to today’s world of overwhelming need.

And yet as I speak these words I realize that I share the reaction of the disciples who are incredulous that Jesus says simply, “Don’t send them away. Give them something to eat.”

Yeah, right!

But on the inactive side of this parable I literally cannot *do* anything. If anything, I am much more in the crowd of needy people seeking healing and hope; who are blindly trusting that Jesus will provide despite all the evidence to the contrary.

Yet I retain enough of the memory of being a *doer* of ministry to recognize that my resentment of the ridiculous demand that Jesus has of the disciples comes from a completely misplaced assumption. If Jesus tells me to do something I believe that *I am personally responsible* for getting it done. As soon as I feel responsible then all of a sudden getting the job done all depends on *me*. In moments I am overwhelmed, isolated and burdened. How I wish I could be one of that crowd who must do nothing but receive Jesus’ attention. When I feel this kind of responsible every task doubles in size and becomes infinitely complicated. In no time I am acutely aware of all the reasons why the task is difficult if not impossible. Instead of being all about being in service it is all about *me*.

Being in the company of the throng who simply trust Jesus to take care of them I see that the key to the disciples’ dilemma is understanding that we never stop being part of the crowd. We are disciples and follow Jesus for the same reason the crowd does. We follow him because we want and need his attention and trust him to take care of us. How does it happen that we claim Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior that we are in a different category? We now are responsible and need to act like Jesus. We cannot claim that the reason we follow Jesus is the same reason we were led to him in the first place!

Friends this morning I appeal to you to recognize that this table is prepared *for you*. It is prepared for you who have sought Jesus and are spiritually tired and hungry. That is the only thing that matters. Receive the nourishment of god. Amen.