

Rev. Liz Hulme Adam  
Tabor Presbyterian Church  
August 2, 2020 Vespers

Matthew 14:13-21  
Sacrifice

## Opening Prayer

Holy One, we come this evening thankful for the consistency of our breath, for the rhythm of time, for the day and for the night, for the trees that surround us and the gifts offered us by your abundant creation. We thank you for music, sky above, the ground beneath, for our guest Fred this evening who makes great sacrifices for our Presbytery in faithfulness and devotion. We give thanks for each person here, who has made it possible for us to have sacred community, for us to worship in Spirit and in Truth. We pray in the name of Jesus who is our Lord. Amen.

## Sermon

I'd like to talk about sacrifice today. This familiar story lifts up the virtue of sharing — that Jesus turned what was small into something large enough to feed masses of people.

What I'd like to point out tonight is what preceded this act. The disciples knew the crowds would eventually need to eat. They said, *let's send them away so they can get dinner*. Presumably, they were hungry, too. The hour was now late.

Those five loaves, and those two fish, were **supposed** to feed their small group. What this means is that those few provisions were ostensibly going to be sacrificed for the sake of the entire crowd.

Jesus was modeling to his disciples an act of taking what is ours and sharing it with others. It is in that sacrifice, the giving over for the sake of others, that turned it into more than the original amount. Like the seed sacrifices its smallness then turns into something more!

What we are willing to sacrifice turns into rich blessing. What we are willing to sacrifice, before God and for the sake of others, turns into rich blessing.

Sacrifice. Embedded in the very word is the word sacred. When we make sacrifices, God makes sacred what we're willing to give up.

Staying home, an ordinary act, is made sacred when done for the sake of the common good.

Jesus sacrificed something else, too, at the very beginning of this story. He wanted to get away. Be by himself. He needed a break. But he had compassion for the people, and their needs. So he changed his plans. He went toward them. To be with them and heal them.

We are called to change our plans when people are in need.

Adjust our expectations for ourselves.

While Jesus wanted to get away, we want the opposite right now, we want to get together, hug and sing and sit side-by-side without fear.

**Our** sacrifice is to keep distant, because we follow the compassionate Jesus.

Compassion is the thread running through this entire collection of scenes in this Matthew passage. Why did Jesus come back to engage with the crowds? Compassion. Why did he say the people should stay instead of going away to get dinner? Compassion.

The word compassion - passionate, heartfelt, the prefix "com", meaning together, join, commingle, in community, with community. Compassion - the desire to alleviate suffering. Not to make suffer! To suffer with.

With. Meaning - not alone. We are not alone. Praise be to God. Amen.

Charge:

"How did the rose ever open its heart and give to this world all its Beauty? It felt the encouragement of light against its Being. Otherwise, we all remain too frightened. " Hafiz