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Worship and Discipleship by Margo Geesing

“The Long Walk of Faith”

I like these Gospel lessons simply because they are about walking through life with faith. They are about the everyday human stuff. They are about fellowship, kindness, loss, sleep, illness, healing and food. They are about the real and the nitty gritty.

July 7, 2024 – *Seventh Sunday after Pentecost* Mark 6:1-13

Crazy people! Crazy people are told about in today’s Gospel. I just came back from a trip to Yosemite National Park. It has been a year in planning [because to get campsites, you have to book a year and a day in advance]. Actually, it’s been two years in the planning since we had some of it planned for last year, before it was canceled because of the flooding there. We packed [and some of us re-packed], we planned meals, we planned what to take with us, we planned some of the activities we wanted to do, we even planned where to stop on the way there to eat and get gas. Even when there are emergencies, we usually get a least a little warning. California has its share of emergencies, especially earthquakes and wildfires, but we have time to prepare for these things. Jesus sent out his disciples with NOTHING. They had the clothes on their backs and a staff. They had to depend upon others for a place to sleep and to eat. And what of the householder who decided to take them in? They are footing the bill for these itinerant preachers for an undetermined amount of time. *“I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.”* is a quote from the Tennessee Williams play *“A Streetcar Named Desire”*. Unlike the disciples that Jesus sent out to “depend on the kindness of strangers”, Blanche DuBois has been reliant on the kindness of strangers, and this is largely due to her inability to accept reality. The disciples went prepared with Jesus’s teachings and authority. These disciples fully inhabited reality. They, and I assume the householders, had complete faith and trust in Jesus and the message that the disciples were sharing. Who of us would be willing to do something like this? Many of us don’t walk out the front door with keys, wallet, water bottle, cell phone, credit card, money, etc. The idea of walking out on family, job, friends, and other commitments to go somewhere, don’t know where or for how long, with NO planning to share the Gospel of Jesus is, to me, pretty impossible to comprehend. But today I am grateful to those disciples who did go out and those disciples who continue to go out and share the Gospel of Jesus. Without them, the story of redemption would have never been told.

July 14, 2024 – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost Mark 6:14-29

Today's Gospel of the beheading of John the Baptist is quite a reflection of Jesus' own death. In both the man in power, Herod and Pontius Pilate, did not want to be responsible for the death of the man they were called to kill. In both the man in power chose to do it anyway because of external pressures. After both deaths the followers of the dead men took the body to bury it. After both men died, their followers continued in community. They continued the leader's mission. And today we are blessed because they did. We have received a faith that has stood the test of time. This is a faith not exclusively for the strong and powerful but for the poor, weak, tired, lost, unsure, and sinful. We are blessed by a God who has walked with us in faith. Who understands loss, pain, fear, loneliness, and abandonment. Our faith continues and grows stronger because of this.

July 21, 2024 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

This Sunday's Gospel is about rest, healing, compassion, and pure faith. The range of emotions that are displayed in this short passage is manifold. We begin with the excitement of the disciples reporting back to Jesus about what they had done and what they had taught. I'm sure they were amazed by what they had done in his name. It's like a child coming home after an exciting time away from their parent and the child tries to tell them EVERYTHING. I even remember telling my most sharing child, "What you are telling me is important but Mommy's ears are tired." Jesus was the same. He wanted them to eat and maybe sleep a little but there were so many people around. Then we have Jesus' meeting with the crowd and having compassion for them, to a point where, rather than resting, he continued to teach them. Then we have the part where people had such pure faith in Jesus that they believed they would be healed just by touching his cloak. I am exhausted just thinking about being pulled in so many directions at once. Families do get this to an extent. Children wanting or needing attention, work, relationships, chores, shopping, dishes, food, and the list goes on. But Jesus was not just being responsible for himself, or a small family, or even a large extended family; he was trying to care for an entire nation, and by extension, the world. So, tonight, in prayer don't ask for anything more; just take a moment and just thank him for giving so much of himself for the world. Maybe tonight, he can get something to eat and a little rest.

July 28, 2024 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost John 6:1-21

You know what I really don't like when dealing with the miracle of the loaves and fishes of Jesus? I don't like it when people say, that it didn't happen. It was just that once people saw that the little boy shared his food, they all pulled out food to share. No. Jesus had a plan. It says it right there: "⁵When 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?' "**⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.**" [John 6:5-6]. Then Jesus sent out his disciples to collect the leftovers; they collected twelve baskets. It was a plan! It had to be. 1) Jesus prayed over the food before having it passed out. In the Gospels, Jesus specifically prays for people to see for a reason. Jesus prays so that those with him will know that the Father sent him. 2) Bread and a connection to the Hebrew Scriptures. The Father fed the Israelites in the desert with mana. Jesus fed the people with bread. Jesus feeds us with his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. 3) Collecting exactly twelve baskets. Jesus knew that he was sending his disciples

out to collect the Twelve Tribes of Israel back together. Jesus did not do things for no reason. There was always a plan. When people discount Jesus's miracles they are discounting his Godhood. They are making him just this guy who said nice things and encouraged people to care for each other. But Jesus did not actually give us this option. One cannot be a good man and a liar. Jesus said he was the Son of the Father; the Father and He were One; thus, Jesus is God. He did true miracles. I shall leave you with this last thought ...

"You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. We are faced, then, with a frightening alternative. This man we are talking about either was (and is) just what He said or else a lunatic, or something worse. Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God. God has landed on this enemy-occupied world in human form." C. S. Lewis, in **Mere Christianity**