

*13Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 15When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "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." 16Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." 17They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." 18And he said, "Bring them here to me." 19Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

I remember the day Kennedy was shot. Algebra II class – Mr. Taylor. No algebra that day. Mr. Taylor talked, we listened. It seemed the world stopped for a moment.

9-11 was like that. Only this time we were there – watching everything happen. The world stopped.

It was world stopping news Jesus heard that day. John, the one who had baptized Jesus, had been beheaded. John's disciples buried him and then came and told Jesus.

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. Jesus wanted to be alone.

Sometimes when the funeral is over and the kids are hanging around I hear mom say, "Go on home – I need some time alone to think - to pray - to get used to the idea that your father is not here anymore."

Now when Jesus heard about John, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.

Maybe we do a disservice to Jesus when we imagine him pulling all the strings – making things happen just the way he wants. When a hurricane buries a city under water does Jesus feel it like someone has hit him in the gut? When Jesus heard about John he wanted to be alone.

But it was not to be. Matthew says that when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.

When the crowds heard it. Heard what? That John had been beheaded? Did that cause them to want to be with Jesus even more? Just as our tragedies and trials cause us to seek out God?

Jesus was not able to be alone- When he went ashore he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion on them and cured their sick.

Jesus helped them even when he really wanted time for himself. Does God want us to be like Jesus in this way – to be available whenever anyone needs us?

What happens when a mother tries to do it all – to respond to every request her children make, her husband makes, the church and the PTA and the soccer team make? Is there a time to say no?

When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “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.”

Enough is enough, time to end all of this giving.

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

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

Jesus said, “Bring them here to me.”

They had almost nothing - as little as we have to offer when all of the demands keep coming at us 24-7.

Someone wants our time, others want our money, even more want our prayers, our attention, our caring.

Jesus took what the disciples brought – looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

They offered what they had to give to Jesus; with his blessing he put it back in their hands.

What they had to give was enough - more than enough. Thousands feasted on their meager gifts. Baskets full were left over.

But you and I say, “That was then and this is now. Feed the hungry and there will be only more hunger to satisfy. And no miracles these days – food runs out – ask the staff at the hunger centers. No matter how much they pray they just can’t stretch a few loaves of bread the way Jesus did.”

So what does this story have to do with you and me? If for us it is mostly a story about a miracle then it is mostly a story about way back then and how God can do anything but not a story about feeding the hungry today. But this can be a story for us about a Lord who even in a weary and discouraged moment does not think only about himself but responds to the needs of others. Will he hear your prayers when you pursue him? He just might even if what you ask is not exactly what he intended to do. I have met some mighty persistent people through the years – there have been some surprises as they persistently pestered Jesus for help.

Or this may be a story about us bringing what little we have, offering it to Jesus, asking him to bless our meager energy or love or resources. What might Jesus accomplish through your small gifts or mine? Who knows? What we offer in faith and in hope and in love might result in feasting and even leftovers. Begin with prayer – offer yourself and what you have to Jesus when your neighbor is in need. Then use your gifts as he directs.

And what about when life kicks you in the gut? I think it is still a good idea to get away as Jesus intended to do. You are not God.

But Jesus is. Amen.