



Reflections for Sunday, August 2, 2020

Good morning church and Facebook friends, I am Lisa Williams pastor of the San Pedro United Methodist Church and we are glad to be worshipping with you this day.

It is the first of the month and we traditionally celebrate the Lord's Super. You are invited to find something in your kitchen that represents bread and a cup of

God's love. All are welcome to participate in our virtual communion. You just need to be open and willing to receive the forgiveness and love that God has already given to you.

Please prayer with me: God of all nations, bring us close, gather us in as we pray together, celebrate together, and explore your word together. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing unto you O Lord, my rock, and my redeemer. Amen.

13 Now when Jesus heard this, (What did he hear? How did they tell him? Which disciple drew the short end of the stick and had to tell Jesus that his cousin, his mentor, his friend was dead? Not by an accident or by an illness but he was beheaded. I cannot image having to be that disciple who went to get John's body, burry him and then go tell Jesus)

he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. (Jesus needed time to process, to mourn what had just happened, to cry perhaps even shout out in anger – WHY God? Why did you let them take my cousin, my friend? I do not know about you but when I hear bad news, I get quiet and retreat to myself. All I want to do is go away and not talk to or see anyone. This is a significant part of the story. Retreating to the wilderness is something we see time after time in the Old and New Testaments. Images of God in the deserted desert showing up and fulfilling his promise to always be with us.)

But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. (When we were in Jerusalem last year, we were mostly in the City, but we did have the opportunity to travel to Bethlehem. As we got further from the City you could see the rolling hills. So, when I read that the crowds followed him I image being able to see from all directions, as far as your eye would take you to watch people walking, families, individuals, friends young and old. Can you only imagine what they must have been hoping for when they got there?)

14 When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. (this morning we are going to spend some time with this phrase. We have made a shift from Jesus as a teacher to Jesus as a miracle worker. This is one of Jesus most recognized miracles – it shows up in all four gospels, so you know it must be a good story. 😊 Before we get

to the miracle of the bread and fish being multiplied and feeding thousands, what struck me this week was the word compassion.

Compassion is a rich emotional word in English so it should not surprise us that this word shows up in both Hebrew and Greek. This is a fun fact for you to impress your friends with: It is also a relatively rare word occurring in 39 verses divided almost equally between the Old and New Testaments. In total it renders ten different words, four Hebrew and six Greek.

The Greek word for compassion is *spagchnizonmai*. It is the Lord Jesus feeling the emotion. Thayer tells us that the word literally means to 'be moved in the bowel' (bowel a human function of movement was also thought to be seated in love and pity).

The framework that we are being given today is the way in which the scripture is using the verb compassion. It is a feeling that takes movement and puts it into action. After seeing the crowds, Jesus felt it! He felt compassion for them. The kind of feeling that swells in your gut, moves throughout your intestines, and your hearts starts to pound as it moves throughout your body. This is what compelled Jesus to act. This could be considered a dark time for Jesus after the loss of John the Baptist, trying to get some respite and yet even in his own darkness and brokenness he is compelled to move forward and act.

Assistant Professor of Religious Studies from Iona College, Jennifer T. Kaalund, says, “So, too, should it be with us. While we may feel sympathy for someone, how often does that emotion result in action? Sit with that for a moment. How often do we witness a person or family perhaps going through a rough time or hear a story that evokes sympathy in our souls, that overwhelming sense of compassion for someone and how often does that emotion result in action? Do we walk away and say to ourselves, “what good can I do?” or do we take the opportunity to educate ourselves and become part of a movement for change?

This past week was the funeral for John Lewis, a politician and civil-rights leader, a House of Representative for Georgia’s 5th congressional district, and an American whose faith was tested again and again. All this, to produce a man of pure joy and unbreakable perseverance.

Like John the Baptist preparing the way, like those Old Testament prophets speaking truth to kings, John Lewis did not hesitate -- he kept on getting on board buses and sitting at lunch counters, got his mugshot taken again and again . John was a gentle and humble man who had a remarkable career. It is said that John treated everyone with kindness and respect because it was innate to him – but John also believed that anyone could do what he did if we are willing to persevere. This is the kind of compassion Jesus felt that day in the wilderness. This is the kind of compassion we are all being called to today.

John Lewis believed that in all of us, there exists the capacity for great courage, that in all of us there is a longing to do what's right, that in all of us there is a willingness to love all people, and to extend to them their God-given rights to dignity and respect. (excerpts from Barack Obama’s

Eulogy for John Lewis, July 30, 2020) In all of us there is that kind of compassion that Jesus felt that day while healing the crowds.

15 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." 16 Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

17 They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." (I am so proud of the lunches this church makes for "Lunches with Love," our Saturday sack lunch delivery. Each bag is filled with a healthy sandwich filled with protein, a fruit cup, maybe a pudding or cookies, chips, juice and a cold bottled water. Last week, Gary asked me to bless the meals before I left and honestly doing that blessing brought me to tears. To think that through the many donations from all of you and the hands and dedication to make these lunches we are multiply and sharing God's grace and love to others we may never met.)

18 And he said, "Bring them here to me." 19 Then 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. (Jesus did not send them away instead he called them to sit down – to be healed and be fed. As we learned last week the kingdom of heaven produces a plentiful harvest from the smallest of seeds. This miracle is dealing with the physical needs of the people. He is not focusing too much on the spiritual needs right now. He is concerned that they are sick, and Jesus feels compassion for those who are hungry.

20 And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. (through the hands of God there is enough and some to share. We just must believe it. As we prepare our table for the celebration of the Lord's Super may we be mindful that as children of God we are compelled and called to ACT. How can we as a church and community take this kind of compassion and create a movement into action? As individuals, what are you willing to do to make this happen?) Amen.

References:

Workingpreacher.org commentary by Jennifer T Kaalund, July 2020

New York Times, Opinion, John Lewis, "Together you can redeem the soul of our nation.", July 30, 2020

Barack Obama, John Lewis Eulogy, July 30,2020

Communion

As we prepare our hearts and minds for communion may we remember that Jesus is present more in times of need than in times of plenty, more in times of desperation than in times of certainty. All we need to do to be worthy of this virtual communion is be willing to accept God's love and forgiveness with our hands opened wide and our hearts willing to receive.

Lift up your hearts and give thanks to the Lord our God.

Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, you made us in your image, to love and to be loved. When you turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. By suffering, death, and resurrection of our only Son Jesus Christ you delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us he took the bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and the blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

Now take your bread hold it in your hand, this is the body of Christ given for you. Take the cup which represents God's love for you; dip the bread in the cup remembering that you are loved and forgiven. **Amen**

Benediction

Here these words from the late John Lewis:

When historians pick up their pens to write the story of the 21st century, let them say that it was your generation who laid down the heavy burdens of hate at last and that peace finally triumphed over violence, aggression and war. So, I say to you, walk with the wind, brothers and sisters, and let the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love be your guide.

Now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Today, tomorrow, and always. Amen.