

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, August 2, 2020

## Lessons in Compassion

*Written by Allison Gingras*

**Isaiah 55:1-3**

**Romans 8:35, 37-39**

**Matthew 14:13-21**



The people came to listen to Jesus because they needed something. What brings you to Jesus? Maybe, they didn't even know consciously what that something was but somehow, they knew whatever it was, it would be found in Jesus. We can surmise some people came because they heard he could heal; the Gospel tells us Jesus cured the sick. Was that enough to make them leave their homes, endure the discomfort of travel? Is that what they needed? Suffering, afraid, broken, probably having exhausted every avenue of healing they knew — when all they had tried failed — they sought this man. Stories of his healings, the miracles, the unexplained, but most importantly the hope drew them to come and see. No one like him existed before, and two thousand years later we know, no one like him has or will come again. What had they heard? What did they expect? Is what attracted them to Jesus, what brings you here as well?

Whatever the reason, they came; in droves, ten thousand men, along with women and children. They crowded the banks where he disembarked from his boat. Scattered across the land before him, finding a place where they could see and more importantly hear this mysterious, miracle man. Discontent in their circumstances — spiritually, economically, politically? Was it just curiosity? Perhaps some came to discover for themselves if this Jesus of Nazareth was truly from God. Was the arduous trek worth it? Was the desire to learn more of the hope, promise, and mercy, offered through his testimonies enough to endure the hardship of travel? Would we have journeyed those miles, to listen to this man?

Crowds came from their homes, whatever their motives, they arrived. Moved by the multitudes, Jesus seized this opportunity to do what he did best — teach and heal. He cured their sick and spent the day among these people. Moved by pity, by compassion, he tirelessly gives, no doubt touching many hearts, converting many souls, stirring the desire of many to become disciples. On this day, in this location, one would find an abundance of many things — grace, hope, mercy, tenderness, love; but what lacked was food. Sustenance of mind and spirit were received, but could this man provide for the body as well? Could he really be the answer to everything we need?

The day was coming to a close when the Apostles approached the Master, entreating him to dismiss the crowds, knowing most would not leave of their own accord. In the presence of such greatness, witnessing things they'd never seen before, it would be difficult, maybe impossible to get them to move from this place. How many times have we been experiencing mountain top experiences, splendid, special days we never want to end? How many of those gathered around Jesus that day, like Peter at the Transfiguration, wished the day to go on forever. These wise men, his chosen Apostles, knew only Jesus could move this group to disperse.

Jesus instead orders the crowds to be seated and calls for the meager amount of food the Apostles were able to gather — five fish and two loaves of bread. Seated, the people are at rest, the burden of the day and their hunger lifted by a simple command. In this short time with Jesus, they have learned to trust in him. They have come to yoke themselves to the teachings of this Rabbi, teacher. Come to me, all who labor, hunger, and thirst, and Jesus promises to take the burden upon himself, and give you rest. We see that promise in the order to be seated. Do you see Jesus' promises as trustworthy? Would you have sat and waited on him to act, or would you doubted, and gone to care for your own needs?

## PRAYER

You, Lord, are never outdone in generosity,  
Help me to see that even my smallest offering  
is multiplied in your love.  
May I sit today and rest, while you fill my baskets  
with abundant blessings.  
Amen.

Taking the sparse offerings, Jesus himself presents them to the Father, blesses them, and breaks them — dividing among those who put their trust in Him to provide. There is not only enough to feed those present, but twelve bushels of fragments are left, collected and no doubt distributed to others in need. When we seek what Jesus is offering, we are given rest. We are filled with more than we need and left with some to distribute to others who also need, but have perhaps not yet realized, what Jesus is offering.

*Allison Gingras*