

FEEDING OF THE 5000 Matt 14

We are going to spend some time in reflective prayer.

The method we will use is familiar to many Christians.

and used for many years. It is a prayer style where you take a passage and then seek to live the experience with your imagination.

Ignatius of Loyola wrote of the form of prayer encouraging prayers to apply all their senses to the task, smell, hearing, touch, taste, sight

As I lead you through the scripture I will ask questions that will help you to use these senses.

Please make yourself comfortable and pray and ask God to show you , our passage in another way.

After a short time in silence I will start to lead you through the text.

It has been some time since you first met Jesus. Heard his message and decided to follow him. Can you remember what you were doing at the time?

How old you were?

In some ways it was like the way that he called those first disciples.

To the fishermen he had said come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

To the tax collector he had simply said come follow me.

Jesus gathered together 12 disciples around him. These apostles were to spread the good news of the kingdom of God.

I want you to imagine that you are there amongst this group

Jesus calls you together and gives you power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sends you out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

He told you to, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money--not even an extra tunic". This is rather radical for a start but the things that you see and the things that you experience really stretch your faith.

You have been away for a number of days and you have just returned to Bethsaida with the other Apostles to tell Jesus about your travels and adventures.

There is much excited conversation and it is well past midnight when you gather some blankets around yourself and fall asleep happy to be with Jesus again.

For some reason you awake early. Jesus is sleeping not far from you can you see him wrapped in the blankets.

What do you see?

He looks rather ordinary a bit like John but there is something very special about him. It is not just the words he speaks but it is also the way he lives, the things he does.

Lying there looking at the sleeping Jesus you wonder what will happen today - will we talk some more?

11 When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.

Just then you hear the distant noise of a crowd that is approaching, can you hear them? As they approach what are your thoughts?

Are you disappointed because you were looking forward to having Jesus to yourself - just for a day.

As you get up look at the type of people who are arriving.
Notice the colour of their clothes
Their ages

There are men , women and even children. They just keep coming there seems to be thousands of them.

The other disciples are getting up now and Jesus does not even seem to be phased by what you see is an intrusion. He simply leads the people out to a hill side by the lake and begins to talk about the kingdom of God. As if to emphasize what he is saying he places his hands on some sick people and prays for them and they are healed.

Look at the crowd what do you notice, how are they reacting to what they see and hear?

After a while you begin to notice the way that your stomach is grumbling (you remember that you had not even had time to have breakfast in the morning). The sun indicates it is now late in the afternoon. The heat has made you tired.

Can you feel how tired you are?
Can you feel how dry your tongue is and how hungry you are?

You get up and go to the disciples and find them at the tail end of a discussion about how late it is getting .

12 The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place."

The disciples get up and approach Jesus and urge him to "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to find shelter and food for it is now late afternoon.

13 But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish--unless we are to go and buy food for all these people."

Jesus replies telling them to give the crowd something to eat."

Can't he remember you have just returned from a journey on which he instructed you to take nothing. Where are you going to find food to feed 5000 people?

Just then a boy who has been sitting near, who has heard what was being said asks if his few fish and loaves of bread might be of help.

Note the eagerness on his face as he offers to help?

Can you smell the fish that has been sitting in his bag during what has been a hot day?

That's all there is, so in a desperate plea hoping that Jesus will understand this time you take the 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread to Jesus and tell him this is all there is and there is not any money to buy dinner for 5000 people.

As the disciples tell Jesus this look at his face. What expression is on it?

Jesus looks at the fish and the loaves of bread and tells the disciples to get the people to sit in groups of 50. Too tired to protest you follow as the disciples obediently begin to organize the crowd.

14 For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each."

15 They did so and made them all sit down.

As you go round the crowd telling them what to do you can't but wonder what's going to happen next. So many people, so great the need for food and only 2 fish and five loaves. In time the crowd is organized. And you watch waiting to see what happens in the late afternoon sun.

Can you feel the warmth of the late afternoon sun on your skin?

The slight cool breeze?

16 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

The crowd grows quiet and looks at Jesus as he picks up the five loaves and the two fish, he looks up to heaven, and blesses them and breaks them.

Did you hear the authority in his voice?

He passes you what seems to be a small portion of the food in a basket and tells you to go and feed the waiting people. But how? You wonder - there are so many people and so little in the basket.

As you look at the contents in the basket what are you feeling?

How are you going to make this work?

Can you see the anticipation on the peoples faces?

As you pass the basket to those sitting on the ground What are you thinking?

To your astonishment people continue to pass it on as they take out what they need to eat. They just keep on passing it !

17 And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

When the last person finishes they hand you the basket back -- there is still food left! Struggling to understand what has just happened you take the basket back to Jesus.

As you approach notice his eyes, his face, his out stretched hands

As you pass him the basket your hand touches his

Your eyes meet his

and for a moment it seems as if you are alone with Jesus

What does he say to you?

Just when you are ready let go of the basket and return to the present time

There is no rush

Sit quietly and reflect on the scripture and the message Jesus has given you.

18 ¶ Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

19 They answered, "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen."

20 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah of God."