



Feeding of the 5000

Begin in prayer together that the Holy Spirit will help us to have an encounter with Jesus (John 14:26)

Point 1: Jesus wants us to have an encounter with him right here in the 21st century.

But I tell you the truth, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you... **Read: John 16:7-18**

Welcome to this study together about “Encounters with Jesus”! Over the last several weeks, our community has been looking together at various encounters that Jesus had with people in the 1st century and how these encounters impacted their lives. Over the next several weeks, we will take this to the next level, asking ourselves how we too can have life-changing encounters with Jesus. 50 days ago we celebrated Easter, rejoicing to see 8 members of our community baptised, a physical picture of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. Last weekend we “ascended” together to a mountain retreat in Leysin, remembering the ascension of Jesus and asking ourselves what this meant for Jesus’ disciples.

Far from being a farewell, Jesus’ ascension marked a new stage in the way his disciples would encounter him. Before he ascended, it was all about his physical presence with them. Just before he ascended, he comforted them by saying, “...it is for your good that I am going away.” (John 16:7). Jesus promised that “in a little while” his followers would receive the Holy Spirit. 10 days later and 50 days after Easter, the Holy Spirit came exactly on the ancient Jewish Feast of Weeks (7 weeks, 49+1 days after the Resurrection). Jesus’ disciples didn’t understand (John 16:18), but we now know that it was always God’s plan for Jesus to leave, making way for the Holy Spirit to come. During this study together, we will indeed encounter Jesus, both through scripture and in our experience of him in community, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

? What does it mean to you that we can “encounter” Jesus through other believers?

Point 2: Jesus invites us to come away to a quiet place to spend time with him.

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. **Read: Mark 6:30-37**

One of the most striking realities that we’ve encountered in our recent studies together is how much Jesus cared about the needs of the people he met. An encounter with Jesus in the 1st century meant to meet with someone who cared deeply for people, and who met them in their place of real need. Today we find Jesus, moved by compassion, being willing to disrupt his original plan to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of a large crowd of people. Jesus was right in the middle of a very busy time... sound familiar? How often do we look like the disciples in this passage, wanting to review all that we “have done and taught” (Mark 6:30), or maybe even to question if we’ve done enough. 21st century church life can look just like the events of this passage, with “so much coming and going that (we) didn’t even have a chance to eat” (Mark 6:31). Jesus knew his disciples needed to rest and reconnect with him.

Maybe this study series can be an ideal opportunity to rest and reconnect with Jesus and one another. So you had a busy day, you rushed to give the kids some food or to finish that last project at work, we all live in the real world of “comings and goings”. But now, whether connecting online or in-person, beginning with prayer or even a cup of coffee together - there goes Pastor Sam again - take a deep breath, clear your mind and think just for a moment about the invitation of Jesus, which he is making to you today as one of his 21st century “disciples”: “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” Do you see? Jesus had compassion for the crowd, but he also has compassion for you. Take a moment now to meditate on those 4 phrases. Come with me... by yourselves... to a quiet place... and get some rest.

? What are the things that might be getting in the way of your regular encounters with Jesus?

Point 3: Jesus wants to use us to help others and have an encounter with Him and meet their needs.

But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” **Read: Mark 6:37-44**

Jesus interrupted his plan for the disciples to take a well-deserved rest when he saw the needs of the crowd. We too may find ourselves in situations where we need to shift our attention and seek the Lord’s guidance for what we should do. Jesus’ response to his disciples seems surprising, but let’s shift our perspective for a moment and see the situation through his eyes. Jesus saw the crowd, they were hungry and weary, and he knew that he and the disciples had something to give. He was moved with compassion, and knew that if he and the disciples would “come alongside” them, despite their own fatigue and seemingly limited resources, they would receive the resourcing they needed to help the crowd.

The feeding of the 5,000 is a well known story, one of the great miracles in the life of the Lord Jesus. But it is more than just a story of miraculous provision. It is also a picture of life in community and of bringing a true encounter with Jesus. It challenges our notions of giving and sharing, demanding that we question the assumptions of our surrounding culture. If we give to others, of ourselves and our resources, will we have enough left? One paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 puts it this way “All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.”

Pray together that God will draw us into an encounter with Jesus so that we can do the same for others.

Notes
