

Jesus' Sensitivity

Scripture Background

This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background for the leader. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group.

Isaiah's beautiful words in the first reading promise God will feed the people with rich fare, a vow that could have been hard to believe, given Isaiah was speaking to the people in exile in Babylon. They were captives in a foreign land far from home. The temple they took so much pride in had been destroyed. Yet Isaiah insists that God still cared for them and would feed them in their poverty and distress. When Jesus fed a crowd of thousands starting with only five loaves and two fish, people saw in him an incarnation of the God who promised to feed his people.

Opening Prayer

Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Ever-living God,

We gather today to celebrate how you are in our midst.

May your Holy Spirit help us to see how you are alive
and working in our world.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:13-21

Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence.

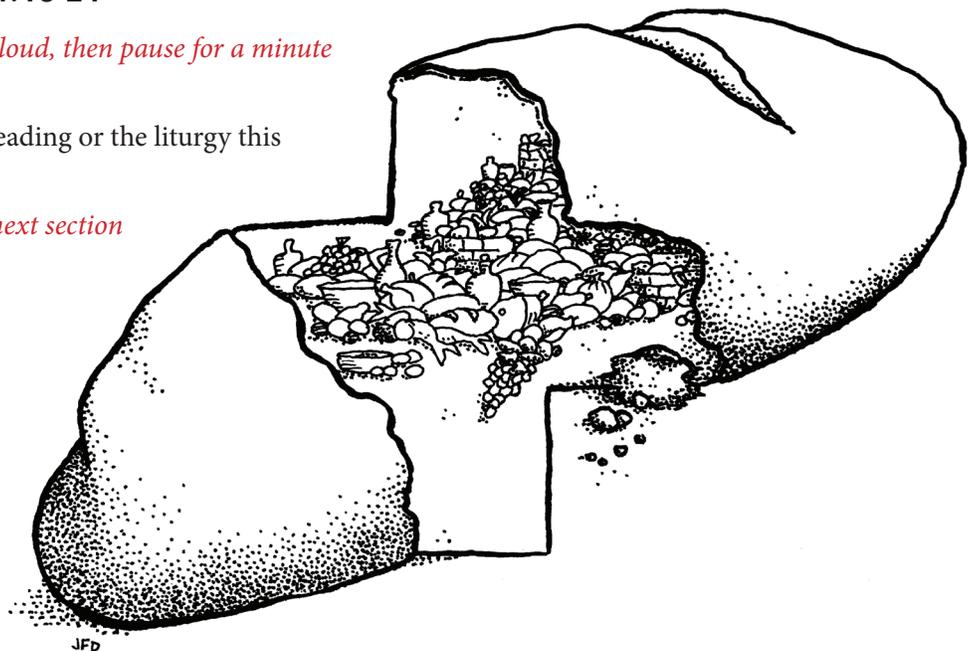
Ask: What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down.

August 2, 2020 • Year A

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- ▶ Isaiah 55:1-3 - Invitation to grace
- ▶ Romans 8:35, 37-39 - The love of Christ
- ▶ Matthew 14:13-21 - Jesus feeds five thousand



Reflections on the Reading

Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:

Poor Jesus can hardly get a break for some time to himself. When he hears that Herod beheaded his good friend and relative John the Baptist, Jesus tries to get away for awhile by heading off in a boat to a deserted place. He steps back onto land only to discover that the crowds have followed him. Jesus could easily be impatient and short with them in his sadness and grief, but instead, his instinctive response was to be moved with compassion for them.

After he cures the sick, his next compassionate response is to keep them safe and feed them, rather than sending them off in the dark from a deserted place. Jesus knew that many, probably most, of the people who flocked to him were poor people, and this crowd would have been no different. Although the disciples suggest he send them away to “buy food for themselves,” Jesus knows many of them wouldn’t have spare change for food. His sensitivity to their situation sparks more compassion, and he feeds them until they are all satisfied.

Early followers of Jesus would have connected that miraculous feeding with the passage from Isaiah in the first reading today. “All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come, without paying and without cost (Isa 55:2). In this case, the crowd eagerly accepts Jesus and his teaching, unlike sometimes when Pharisees or other religious leaders argue and try to pick fights with Jesus. The crowd here mirrors those in the Isaiah passage. They come to Jesus, they listen to him, and they heed him. In return, they are well-fed, and they receive life (Isa 55:3).

Questions for Discussion

Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.

- ① Jesus experienced all the human emotions we experience. What do you imagine he was thinking and feeling when he heard John was killed?
- ② Have you ever witnessed or heard of someone able to respond with compassion to others even in a time of their own grief? Please share.
- ③ Share about a time when something seemed scarce, but ultimately you were given all you needed.

Closing Prayer

Pray the following aloud together:

Lord, thank you for the reminders from Scripture of your love for us. Help us to be living witnesses of that love with all those we encounter this coming week. Amen.