

November 13, 2022

Luke 9:10-17

“Marching Orders: Waiting Tables”

I was reminded recently of coming home from college and helping my mother in the kitchen as Thanksgiving meal was being prepared. She was going to open a can of something – perhaps pumpkin – and I stopped her and said, “Wait mom, I learned something working in the kitchen.” Since I didn’t have the clean rags I carried in the ties of my apron at work I grabbed a paper towel, ran some water and wiped the edge of the can with it. And there – on the paper towel – was a dark stain in the shape of the edge of the can. This felt to me like a slam dunk. Opening the can now would be much cleaner and more hygienic. You know, I don’t think my mom even smiled. She took the can out of my hand and said, “If you want to do that, *feel free.*” And that was that. I am not sure she ever let me in the kitchen during food preparation again.

As we manage our lives, we count on our life experience. My mother was not interested in lessons in the kitchen from her son at Thanksgiving. And that’s fair. *We see a similar experience in our text today with Jesus and the disciples.* Jesus is once again taking time for those who need him when he needs some time alone.

The day is ending, and the disciples quite reasonably come to Jesus and say, “*Lord, you can’t keep all these people here – you need to send them away so they can get some food.*” We tend to think the disciples are being short sighted and maybe even mean. But *that’s only because we know the end of the story.* The truth is, hard life experience told the disciples sending the crowds away to meet their physical needs – was wise.

Personal experience and fear of scarcity give us an over abundance of caution.

And when they do – we are in the company of Jesus disciples on that day. We aren’t bad people – *just people. People overconfident in own experience.*

Don’t get me wrong. *I am sure my mom never suffered from food poisoning because she didn’t follow my advice.* And sanctified common sense is helpful. I think *we should live as thoughtfully as we can.* That’s what the disciples were doing – and then Jesus said, “***You give them something to eat.***” *If you have never found Jesus words shocking – you haven’t been listening.* Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, feed people who are overwhelming the available food supply.

The key, it seems to me – *is to be ready when God in Christ comes back with a counteroffer*. We don't have any choice but to pay attention to our life experience. And if we apply sanctified common sense instead of simple prejudice – good for us. But our story today teaches us ***we need to be ready when what we already know isn't enough*** – “you give them something to eat.”

Notice the disciples point out the unreasonable nature of Jesus request – and then *take steps to answer the call*. We don't have enough money for that! Becomes – “*Well, we do have some loaves and fishes* – they are not enough mind you – but we do have them.”

And then they do what Jesus asks: Sit the people down in groups and get them ready to eat. Nothing has changed – *past experience and the appearance of scarcity remains* – ***but they do it***. They bring what they have to Jesus – and the meal begins.

We are rightly impressed with Jesus' miracle. But this passage is **less about the miracle and more about the relationship of Jesus and his disciples**. Jesus calls them *beyond what they know*. We are invited to *believe life is more than a zero-sum game* and it isn't necessary to hold everything close to the chest or we will lose. *Notice the disciples work to help Jesus feed the crowd*. Sure – he multiplies the loaves but ***who waits the tables?*** The disciples *take part in what they didn't understand* because **Jesus and not their life experience** called them to it. They waited tables when there were no tables.

Today is the day we receive estimate of giving cards. When we fill out those cards we do so based on *our experience and our sanctified common sense*. Let us also give to God based on the call of Christ. ***Christ who leads us to places we haven't been before and calls us to be a part of his work.***

God is calling us “beyond what simply has been.” Let's answer – even if it is with baby steps - *and not be surprised when Christ meets needs we thought beyond help*. As brothers and sisters of Jesus – let's find the grace to wait tables – even when we have trouble finding them.