

TITLE: "Communion Is about Transformation"

TEXT: Mark 6:30-44 (NT p. 41)

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

³¹He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

³⁵When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; ³⁶send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat."

³⁷But [Jesus] answered them, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" ³⁸And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish."

³⁹Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass.

⁴⁰So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²And all ate and were filled; ⁴³and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Introduction – Communion is about transformation

Communion is about transformation. Ordinary bread and juice are transformed into holy symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. And Communion is about a transformation in us. When we partake of the bread and juice, we can allow these symbols of Jesus to change us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.

1. Rest is Jesus

Imagine what would happen if a man came to Dryden and started healing people. I mean REALLY healing people.

People with terminal cancer were suddenly cancer-free.

People with multiple sclerosis could all-of-a-sudden move freely.

Sightless folks suddenly became sighted.

Arthritic people were able to bend and walk and throw away their Advil.

People with heart conditions, suddenly 100% cured.

Some people would come out of curiosity, some would come for healing for themselves, some would bring people to be healed. The more people who were healed, the more word would get around and the more would come. The police would have to be there to prevent the crowds from getting out of hand.

Now, imagine this happening 2,000 years ago when there was very little affective medical help available. People must have been yelling, pushing, shoving, trying to see over the heads of others to where Jesus was. People were asking which way to go. The smell of dust and heat and sweat was overwhelming. When people found Jesus, they told him their troubles and begged for healing, while others tried to get his attention. This is how it was every day and the text says Jesus and the disciples didn't even have time to eat.

Jesus realized that the disciples needed a break, so they rowed to a deserted place on the other side of the lake to have some time alone. The lake is surrounded by hills and people looked out and saw which way the boat was heading, figured out where they were heading and ran to all the villages in the area to tell their friends and relatives. This was the little vacation that never happened.

If you feel the need for rest and renewal this morning, please listen to this: REST is JESUS. Rest is Jesus. Jesus says:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give to rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28).

If the Lord is with you, and you are doing what the Lord wants you to do, JESUS will give you the rest you need.

The problem usually is that we have our own agendas, our goals and our own time tables, our own ways of coping with life, so we surge ahead and MISS opportunities for rest and renewal that the Lord wants to give us. And sometimes the Lord gives us rest and renewal in ways we would never expect.

Let me tell you a story. It's by Fred Rogers and it happened at the Special Olympics in Seattle..

For the 100-yard-dash there were nine contestants, all of them so-called physically or mentally disabled. All nine of them assembled at the starting line and at the sound of the gun, they took off. But one little boy didn't get very far. He stumbled and fell and hurt his knee and began to cry.

The other eight children heard the boy crying. They slowed down, turned around and ran back to him – every ONE of them ran back to him. One little girl with Down syndrome bent down and kissed the boy and said, "This will make it better." The little boy got up, and he and the rest of the runners linked their arms together and joyfully walked to the finish line.

They all finished the race at the same time. And when they did, everyone in the stadium stood up and clapped and whistled and cheered for a long, long time. People who were there are still telling the story with obvious delight. And do you know why?

Because deep down we know that what matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What really matters is helping others win, too, even if it means slowing down and changing our course now and then.

Jesus knew this. Jesus needed rest as well as his disciples. But Jesus was willing to give up his own plans for rest, and even the rest he knew his friends needed, in order to help others who had deeper needs. And when we are willing to make changes in the course of our life in order to help others, we will find that Jesus will give us the rest and renewal we need even if we don't get the rest we THINK we need.

2. "YOU give them something to eat."

When the disciples told Jesus that the huge crowd of people needed food, Jesus said: "YOU give them something to eat." Jesus is saying the same thing to us this morning:

“There are people in Haiti and Chile who have no homes because of earthquakes. Jesus says, “YOU give them homes.”

“There are people around the world who have no hope of providing for their families.” YOU give them livelihoods.”

“There are people in Ethiopia who have no water to drink.” Jesus says, “YOU give them water to drink.”

“There are kids in this country who cannot afford higher education.” Jesus says, “YOU educate them.”

“And there are hungry kids here in Dryden this summer.” Jesus says, “YOU give them something to eat.”

When Jesus told the disciple to feed the massive crowd, they were astounded. If they were here in Dryden today, they would have said, “Are we going to go to Clark’s and buy \$10,000 worth of food to feed them all?” ...And Jesus said, “What have you got?” ...They said, “Five loaves and two fish.” And with this meager fare, Jesus fed 5,000 men along with women and children.

And Jesus says to us this morning, “What HAVE you got?”

And we say, “Not a lot. But we WILL give some of what we have.”

And because you have given to Christmas Joy Offering, Blanket Sunday, Heifer International, Presbyterian Thank Offering, One Great Hour of Sharing, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Kitchen Cupboard and the WEB Program, Jesus is multiplying our gifts and thousands of people all over the world.

Just after school ended for the summer, there was a surge of people at the Kitchen Cupboard. When poor children do not receive free breakfasts and lunches at school, they need more food at home and many parents simply do not have enough money to buy that food. ...Also this summer, the WEB (weekend backpack) Program is bringing nutritious snacks to children in area trailer parks along with the Solar Express, which brings library books for children to read.

...Don’t tell ME miracles do not happen nowadays. I see them every day!

3. Simple fare

In the text, the disciples missed their chance to get a little vacation with Jesus away from the crowds. But, you know, they certainly would not have had much to eat if it had gone as planned. When they collected all they had, it was five loaves and two fish. Nowhere NEAR enough to feed 13 hungry men. But, in the end, there were 12 baskets of scraps left over, so the disciple had all they wanted to eat and then some.

And I am willing to bet that the disciples, when they saw the bread and fish being multiplied by Jesus, and passed out all they food to hungry people, were renewed and rejuvenated in ways they never expected. ...Some people long for rich and expensive food. Jesus gives us plainer fair, like the bread and fish in the text, or the bread and juice at the Lord 's Table this morning. Here is a poem about that very thing. It's titled *Communion* and it's by David Steele:

*The table now is simply spread
With little loaves of common bread.
Not pumpernickel, corn or rye
To spark the taste or please the eye.
Just bread – it's sold in any store.
I've seen it many times before.*

*I am accustomed, when a guest,
To being rather more impressed.
I might expect a gracious host
To brown the bread and make some toast,
Or see his table was arrayed
With butter, jam and marmalade.
Danish pastries filled with jam,
Some scrambled eggs with lots of ham.
This would impress me more. Instead
The Lord shares common, daily bread.*

*I'll eat this bread; but I will find
Its taste won't linger in my mind.
This bread is easy to dismiss.
I've had ten thousand bites like this.
This bread, I think, in many ways
Reminds me of my common days.*

*Some days are vivid in design,
Resembling an exotic wine,
Days of joy and days of sorrow.
(One may well arrive tomorrow.)
But nearly all the days I've led
Are more like this plain, common bread;
Like, say, last 19th of September.
(A day I simply can't remember.)
It's gone, slipped from my memory
Just as this bread is bound to be.*

*At this table I shall praise
The God who gives me common days.
And I shall live these days with pride,
Knowing God moves by my side.
For at this table God has said:
"I share with you this daily bread,"
And by this Word we all are fed.*

Conclusion – Communion is about transformation

Communion is about that transformation. Communion transforms regular bread and juice into holy symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Communion also takes regular every day people, like you and me, and changes us into holy beings who are, more and more, being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

Amen.