

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

August 2, 2020

Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

Today, the first Sunday of the month, we will celebrate Holy Communion. You are invited to take part in this meal by preparing bread and wine (or juice) in your home. The Communion liturgy is included in the service.

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God,

we confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN #461

All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly

1 All who hunger gather gladly;

holy manna is our bread.

Come from wilderness and wand'ring.

Here in truth we will be fed.

You that yearn for days of fullness,

all around us is our food.

Taste and see the grace eternal.

Taste and see that God is good.

2 All who hunger, never strangers;

seeker, be a welcome guest.

Come from restlessness and roaming.

Here in joy we keep the feast.

We that once were lost and scattered

in communion's love have stood.

Taste and see the grace eternal.

Taste and see that God is good.

3 All who hunger, sing together,

Jesus Christ is living bread.

Come from loneliness and longing.

Here in peace we have been fed.

Blest are those who from this table
live their days in gratitude.

Taste and see the grace eternal.

Taste and see that God is good.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. **Amen, amen.**

HYMN OF PRAISE

Refrain: This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. Power and riches, wisdom and strength, and honor and blessing and glory are his. Refrain

Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation: Blessing and honor, glory and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. Refrain

For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. Refrain

PRAYER OF THE DAY The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** *Let us pray . . .*

God of abundance, you meet us in the wilderness and share with us bread that fills our bodies and our souls. Awaken in us a hunger for your justice, mercy, and love, that we might boldly extend your gracious invitation to the feast to all who hunger through Jesus Christ, the bread of life, Amen.

READING: Isaiah 55:1-5

¹Ho, everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
 come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.

²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.

³Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
 and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has glorified you.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 14:13-21

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³Now when Jesus heard [about the beheading of John the Baptist], he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Ali Tranvik

I've been thinking a lot about "place" recently. My own sense of "place" has shifted significantly in recent weeks, as Isak and I moved from NC to MN, where we're getting to know this place we now call home. I've begun to learn about Brooklyn Center, our neighbors here on Brooklyn Blvd (Que Viet Vietnamese restaurant, Northport and Garden City elementary Schools, The Sanctuary assisted living facility, Evans-Nordby funeral home, Hmong Center Health Center, Imam Husain Islamic Center, CAPI immigration and refugee services across the street)...what an incredible place to be the church! I've begun to learn about you all at Cross of Glory, visiting the places you live, sitting in your lawns and hearing your stories, the stories where you've seen God here in this place.

I had an English teacher in high school who always talked about the importance of **place** in stories. In the 5 W's—the "Who, What, When, Where, and Why" questions—he always argued the most important W is "Where," claiming that place isn't just the backdrop for the story, but that the place itself is actually a character in the story...

In today's gospel story—The Feeding of the Five Thousand—I'm usually concerned with the *other* W questions, namely "What" (five loaves and two fish!?) and "Who" (5,000 people!?). And even though it doesn't start with a W, I also get hung up on the question of "How." *How* in the world did Jesus pull this off? *How* exactly did five loaves and two fish magically multiply? *How* could this be?

But let's take a moment and return to that often-overlooked "W" - Where. Because place is not background information, as my English teacher would say, but actually matters in how we understand the rest of the story. So in verse 13, we read that the setting for today's story is a "deserted place," also translated as "wilderness place" or "lonely place apart." In other words, this is a place of emptiness and barrenness. A place of disorientation and isolation and loneliness. A place of hunger. The wilderness is never a destination, right? It's an in-between place. A "placeless" place.

Jesus is in this place in the first place because he is in potential danger. You see, King Herod had recently ordered the beheading of John the Baptist, this wayward prophet who Herod saw as a threat to his own power. Given Jesus is also seen as a threat, he withdraws into the wilderness. The crowds that gather there are also "fugitives" of a sort. They too were unwanted in the empire. Within the urban centers, "with its sharply differentiated society, carefully controlled power, and protected self-interest" there was *no place* for the hungry poor" (Carter).

Their hunger was very literal. Biblical scholar Warren Carter writes that “the first-century Roman Empire was marked by significant inequalities concerning food access. Many people struggled on a daily basis for adequate food and nutrition. The empire was very hierarchical in its social structure, with a small group of ruling elites who enjoyed abundant variety and good quality of food, while [everyone else] lived at or below subsistence level...the lack of food was one of the primary ways people experienced the injustice of this disparity of power.”

We see this literal hunger in our world today, right? It’s estimated that 690+ million people do not have enough food to eat. Here in the Twin Cities, there are growing communities of people living in streets and city parks who rely on food pantries and shelters for meals, many of whom whose services have been drastically limited if not ceased completely during Covid-19. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost work, meaning more and more parents are struggling to put food on the table, and more and more kids have empty stomachs. Material hunger, locally and globally, is not a problem of limited resources (there is more than enough food to go around) but is a result of *greed* and *wastefulness*. Some of us have more than enough bread. Others of us have none.

But the crowds in our story today were also hungry for something else, it seems. They were hungry not just for physical bread that would satisfy their aching stomachs, but for spiritual bread that would fill their aching souls. They were hungry for a kind of togetherness that the empire was designed to *prevent from happening*. They were craving community.

We see this spiritual hunger in our world today as well. We too are hungry for community. We are lonely and isolated, yearning for community and connection. And these cravings have only been made worse by Covid-19.

So maybe you feel like you’re in the wilderness. Maybe when you look at your own life, you see places of barrenness. Maybe when you look at the church, you see emptiness (shrinking membership, decreasing numbers). Maybe you are joining with the disciples in today’s text in crying, “This is a desert! We are in the middle of nowhere. There is not enough.” (Long).

But it is these wilderness moments, the “deserted places,” the placeless places, these locations at the outskirts and the margins that are *seen* as insignificant, barren, bereft of life, it is *these* places where Jesus does his ministry! In today’s story, a place that symbolizes loneliness becomes a place of radical togetherness. A situation of scarcity is transformed a moment of abundance. A place that represents hunger is the site of a feast. The story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 is a story about a kind of communion that’s not *supposed* to happen, a place where no one thought it *could* happen, a place where no one thought communion was possible...

To be clear, this communion didn’t look quite like the communion we share at church. It didn’t take place in a sanctuary. The words of institution weren’t recited. This communion didn’t follow the expected routine of a Sunday morning service. The communion we’re accustomed to—which we’ll share virtually later in today’s service—is *one* kind of communion. But this meal in the wilderness shows us that communion—*church*—can happen in outside the church building: in our homes, at our kitchen tables, in parks and restaurants, streets and shelters, in wilderness places where no one thought communion was possible...

A couple years ago, my husband Isak and I spent the summer on the U.S.-Mexico border. We lived and worked at *La Casa del Migrante*, a hospitality house for migrants and refugees who were fleeing violence or wars in their home countries and seeking a better life in the U.S., or deportees, who had just been deported from the U.S. and needed a place to stay as they began to figure out what was next. *La Casa* dwelled in the shadow of the U.S.-Mexico border. Out our window, we could see the wall itself. We could hear the helicopters regularly patrolling the skies. We could watch the military vehicles patrolling the streets below. For those of you who have ever been in a border zone, you know the violence that goes into protecting and patrolling it. For those of you who haven’t, I can tell you that the border is made to feel like an insurmountable barrier (and this was under the Obama Administration, I should add, years before Trump became president).

On Sundays, Isak and I would go to the ocean in Tijuana, where the border wall jutted out into the water. There was a park along the border wall called Friendship Park, originally created as a symbol of friendship between Mexico and the US. But over the years, various layers of fences and walls have been built through the park between the U.S. side and the Mexican side, so that

no one on either side can even approach the border wall itself. But there is a 4-hour period on Sundays where family members and friends and loved ones are permitted to go past the first set of fences and go right up to the border wall, to talk and touch fingertips through the thick metal grid.

There is a church that worships each Sunday through the wall, half of the church from the U.S., the other half from Mexico. They gather on either side of the wall with a loud speaker, guitars, and a group of people who gather on both sides to sing, pray, and read scripture.

The whole service is powerful, but the part that sticks with me the most is communion. The pastor on the Tijuana side would take a loaf of bread and say the words that we say each week here around this table: “*Tomen y coman*, take and eat; this bread is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me.” The pastor broke the bread into pieces and passed them around to those of us standing on the Tijuana side. And then, he took pieces of that same bread and *pushed them* through the small holes of the border wall to our neighbors on the US side, where open hands received them. “*Tomen y coman*, take and eat. This is my body given for you.”

Jesus makes communion possible where it is not supposed to happen—in “deserted” and “wilderness places.” In the shadow of steel-grated barricades. In places of impossibility, Jesus “makes a way out of no way,” as our friends in the black church tradition might say.

Watching bread being pushed through a militarized national border was a striking and surprising image. But when I think about it, it shouldn’t be. Because the Jesus that was squeezing through the border wall is the same Jesus who made a way out of no way when he miraculously multiplied loaves and fishes to feed 5,000+ people in the wilderness. It is the same Jesus who made a way out of no way when he was killed but rose again, not just as a spirit but as a body with scars to show for it. If a state-sanctioned murder on the cross could not stop Jesus, then a state-sanctioned border wall can certainly not stop Jesus from being given and shared. The most powerful forces in the world are powerless in the face of Jesus, who *gives* bread and who *is* bread.

Just as the multiplying bread in today’s story could not be controlled or contained, neither can those who are fed with it. As people fed with bread, how can we not but *share* bread? And I’m talking here about both physical and spiritual bread. I think it’s easy to separate the two, to think that Christianity, or church, or communion is *only* (or at least, most *importantly*) about being spiritually filled. The logic goes like this: churches do the work of physical feeding (or perhaps even more difficult, of eating *with* our neighbors who are hungry) if there is extra time, or energy, or resources, but real church is about the spiritual stuff. But this story shows us that if we think church is only about feeding souls but not stomachs, then we’ve missed the point. Because Jesus feeds the hungry not with metaphors of fullness but with literal food. And that is our literal call too, my friends. To fight for a world in which all have enough to eat. To ensure that kids in our neighborhood—our place—aren’t struggling with hunger on top of the numerous other challenges that this upcoming school year will hold. To check in on those in our community who live alone and can’t make it to the grocery store. To find ways to invite people into communion, not just the one that happens in our Sunday morning liturgy but the wilderness communion moments that happen around tables of all kinds and in all places...

In a few moments from now, we will share a form of communion together. Cross of Glory has celebrated Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month during this time apart, and so we do so again today. And like the loaves and fishes in the wilderness, we do not know exactly *how* it is that Jesus will make this feast possible. But we can trust that Jesus—who gives bread and who is bread—will be shared abundantly among this scattered wilderness community today. We can trust that this gift is given, not always in ways we understand or expect or even ask for, but that it is pushed through the cracks of space and time into our open hands. For all who hunger. So let’s feast. Amen!

Sources:

- Carter, Warren. *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000).
- Gomes, Peter. *Sermons* (New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1998).

- Long, Thomas G. *Matthew*, Westminster Bible Companion series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).
- Warren Carter, "Commentary on Matthew 14:13-21," *Working Preacher*, 2014.

HYMN #472 Eat This Bread

Eat this bread, drink this cup,
 come to me and never be hungry.
 Eat this bread, drink this cup,
 trust in me and you will not thirst.

Jesus Christ, bread of life,
 those who come to you will not hunger.
 Jesus Christ, risen Lord,
 those who trust in you will not thirst.

CONFESSION OF FAITH Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

Together in the wilderness, we lift up these prayers of the people, praying for the church, the world, and all those in need...

God of abundance, in places that appear to be barren and with resources that appear to be meager, you show us that there is enough--and some to share. We give you thanks for the loaves and fish here at Cross of Glory, for each person in this church community, and for the gifts of time, talent, and treasure they generously share. With these loaves and fish, help us to trust in the feast unfolding around us. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our bread, we pray for all who hunger on this day. For those whose stomachs grumble for physical food, give bread. We confess that this physical hunger is not a result of there not being enough bread, but of our own greed and tendencies to hoard it. Forgive us, O God, and help us find generous, creative, and loving ways to ensure that all bodies are fed. For those whose spirits grumble for spiritual food, give bread. Fill those who feel alone or afraid with your nourishing presence, that we all might experience the belonging and community we so crave. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, the bountiful earth offers sustenance and shelter for all creatures. In this summer season, we give you thanks for the sun that brings warmth, for the rains that cool, and for the food that is growing in the earth that sustains life. Move us to be mindful of ways big and small that we can care for the world that we are dependent on and connected to, the world that you so love. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort, you open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Hear the anguish of tender hearts who cry to you in suffering and satisfy their deepest needs. Bring comfort healing to those who suffer in body, mind, and spirit, especially Bev, Gil, Doris, Terry and Carol, Vicky, Nancy, Laura, Caroline and Rick, and the families of Rick Thorkelson and Delores Welshinger, who now rest in your eternal care. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As we lift up these prayers, and any that remain in the silence of our hearts, incline your ear, and come to us; listen, so that we may live. Amen.

OFFERTORY

At this time, you are invited to prepare your offering, which can be mailed to the church office (5929 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429). Thank you for the ways you continue to generously support the ministries of Cross of Glory!

OFFERTORY RESPONSE

The Table

I will feast at the table of the Lord
I will feast at the table of the Lord
I won't hunger anymore at His table

Come all you weary come and find
His yoke is easy His burden is light
He is able He will restore
At the table of the Lord, (At the table of the Lord)
There is healing at the table of the Lord
There is healing at the table of the Lord
Oh and I won't suffer anymore at His table

There is peace at the table of the Lord
There is peace at the table of the Lord
I won't worry anymore at His table

I'm invited to the table of the Lord
I'm invited to the table of the Lord
He says come just as you are to His table

I know He has a place for me
Oh what joy will fill my heart
With the saints around the mercy seat of God

OFFERING PRAYER

God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our daily bread. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us always to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

COMMUNION

The body of Christ is given for you. The blood of Christ is shed for you.

You are invited to partake in this holy meal at home with a form of bread and either wine or juice, trusting that God is present in it, and that it unites us as one body even while we are apart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of the welcome table, in this meal we have feasted on your goodness. Gathered and sustained by the gifts of bread and wine, empower us now to share your abundant love with all who are hungry, through Jesus Christ, the giver of life. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, ✠ Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. Amen.

SENDING FORTH SONG

Multiply Your love through us
To the lost and the least
Let us be Your healing hands
Your instruments of peace
May our single purpose be
To imitate Your life
Through our simple words and deeds
Let love be multiplied

Let us see Your kingdom come
To the poor and broken ones
Let us see a mighty flood
Of justice and mercy O Jesus
Let love be multiplied
Let love be multiplied

Let love be multiplied
Let love be multiplied (REPEAT)

Multiply Your love through us
Multiply Your love (REPEAT)

Multiply Your Love

Multiply Your love through me
To someone in need
Help me Lord to freely give
This grace that I've received
Let my single purpose be
To imitate Your life
Through my simple words and deeds
Let love be multiplied

Multiply Your church through us
To the ends of the earth
Where there's only barrenness
Let us see new birth
Use us as Your laborer's
Working side by side
Let us see Your harvest come
Let love be multiplied

Multiply Your love multiply Your love
Multiply Your love multiply Your love

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.
Thanks be to God.

Community Announcements:

- Meet-and-Greets with Pastor Ali are officially underway! Thanks to all those who have already taken part. An additional session has been scheduled for Thursday 8/6 at 10 am at Wilma Frantz's home. Please reach out to Sue in the office at svukelich@crossofglory.us to RSVP.
- Bible Study meets Tuesday mornings at 9:30 am on Zoom. We'd love to have you take part as we explore the texts for the coming Sunday. You can join by using the *same* Zoom information that we use for worship on Sunday mornings. If you have any questions about how to connect, reach out to Pastor Ali at atranvik@crossofglory.us or 763-533-8602.
- Per the suggestion of the Minneapolis Area Synod, Pastor Ali is assembling a Covid-19 task force as we continue to discern how to faithfully share life together in the midst of the pandemic. If you are interested in taking part or learning more, please reach out to Pastor Ali.
- The Cross of Glory softball is 4-0! If you'd like to cheer on the softball team, join us on Monday nights. This coming Monday 8/3, Cross of Glory plays at 8:20 pm at the north field at Centennial Park. Fans will sit physically distanced - bring your own lawn chair!

This week, we learned that our sister, Delores Welshinger passed away at the age of 95. Delores had been living at Majestic Pines Senior Living Care Center in Grand Rapids, MN since 2017 to be near to children in the area. There will be a family service on August 22, 2020 at North Star Lake near Marcell, MN. If you wish to send a card to the family, please contact Lois Tollefsrud at 763-561-2613. The family suggested that memorials be given to Cross of Glory.