

He looked up to Heaven

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Eighth Sunday after Pentecost) is Mark 6:30-44. While much of this reading is about the feeding of the 5000, there are also several shorter narratives. All of these in one way or another help teach powerful lessons for the disciples and us.

The opening verses have the disciples coming back from their teaching mission. Earthmoving things had happened as they preached repentance, cast out evil spirits, healed the sick and taught that the kingdom of God had come in the person of Christ. They were very excited and strained to share what had happened with Jesus. The death of John the Baptizer immediately preceding our text (Mark 6:14–29) also impacted the disciples, and they needed comfort and instruction. Jesus invites them to go to a quiet place where they can debrief.

This is one of several occasions in Scripture where Jesus speaks of physical rest from labor as well as spiritual rejuvenation. His words here reveal a concern for the disciples' complete well-being. The invitation to "rest" provides a vivid picture of the Sabbath day and the Divine Service as a foretaste of eternal rest for believers.

A large crowd races ahead of Jesus and the disciples. It is true that some of them were only curious. They had spiritual needs which they didn't even know about. Jesus had compassion on them and taught them.

While the disciples had seen mindboggling events unfold when they were on their mission trip, they are stumped when Jesus suggests that they feed the people. They thought of only earthly restraints of why this couldn't be done. They forgot about the power that they had received from God when they were caring out Jesus' assignment.

Now Jesus takes over. He sets a great model for the disciples and us when "*he looked up to heaven*" (Mark 6:41). Jesus knew where his power source was. Like the disciples, we can all too often forget the power source that came to us in our baptism and is renewed through the Word and Sacrament in our worship services. But, the Lord stands ready to direct us back to him, our only true spiritual source.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for bringing us this wonderful reminder of the great things you stand ready to do for. Help us to look to you for comfort and strength when we experience events that would tempt us to look to ourselves for the solution. Amen