



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of February 13, 2022 (John 6:35-59)

Prayers for Groups & Personal Devotion:

Christ, who showed compassion and who took time to pray, we bring our prayers for our world and for our communities today.

We pray for those who are hungry, may they discover a community that will feed them in body and soul.

We pray for those who are homeless, may they discover shelter in the body of Christ.

We pray for those caught up in war and violence, may they discover refuge in communities of hope.

Christ, who enabled your disciples to grow in ways they could never have imagined, may we grow and share the abundance of all the gifts with which you enrich us, may we be prepared to take risks for the sake of the kingdom...

Devotions for Life A LifeGroup Resource

The Story: John 6:35-59

Context: This week's story is kind of a tough one. Let yourself be a little confused by it. Wrestle with it. We left off with a healing in John 5, after which Jesus does a lot of talking about his relationship as the Son of the Father and that he comes from the Father. This is one of the big recurring themes in John: That Jesus comes from the Father, that he is the Word of God made flesh, that he is the very presence of God in the world. That kind of talk does two things: One, it continues to enrage the religious leaders, because it's blasphemy to them. Two, it sets the stage for what happens in chapter 6.

In chapter 6 we get the famous story, one which appears in some form in all four Gospels, the feeding of the 5,000. The distinction in John, however is that it is Jesus himself that distributes the bread rather than the disciples. This feeding is another one of his signs. After this we get a very short telling of another of his signs of walking on the water. There is a pattern in John where after every sign (and they are signs, not miracles in John, which means they point to something) there is interpretation of and discourse about that sign. Our story today is the discourse about the sign of feeding the 5,000.



...But may we also be prepared to provide safety and solace for those whose need is for calm amidst the storms of life.

God equip and enable us to equip and enable others to journey together through all that confronts us in life, strengthened by traveling together with you in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Acts of Compassion & Justice:

- It's a new month! This month we are raising funds for Small Sums (www.smallsums.org), whose sole purpose is to help homeless individuals, who have found jobs, with the specific things they need to start back to work. They provide clients with such things as required work clothes and shoes, trade tools, professional licenses or union dues, and bus passes. Consider donating to them via the donate link at www.aldersgatemn.com.



Reading the Story: Keep in mind that the feeding of the 5,000 is the context and sign for these somewhat graphic words from Jesus. Also note if any of the language sounds familiar to any other stories we've read, particularly Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman. Later in this passage, Jesus gets a little graphic. It's important to remember that while it appears to be a clear allusion to the Eucharist, there is no Eucharist in the Gospel of John- at least not in the traditional and explicit form we are used to. Where else might a different form of the Eucharist show up or has already shown up?

Questions for Discussion & Reflection:

- What words, phrases or portions from this story stood out to you in your hearing of it? What captured your imagination? If you could ask a Biblical scholar one question about this story, what would it be?
- Do you see any language similar to other stories we've read? Particularly Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman?
- Why do you think Jesus takes the food analogy to an even more graphic level? How would you respond to language like this had you been reading about Jesus and Christianity for the first time?
- Jesus is arguing with the Pharisees here, but what do you think his followers are thinking? What do you think about all of it?
- How would you describe your daily *spiritual* diet? Junk food? Fast-food? Frozen food? Baby food? Full home cooked meal? Leftovers?
- Has your familiarity with Jesus (e.g.: what you learned in Sunday School, Bible Studies, worship, school, etc.) ever kept you from seeing who Jesus really is or a side of who he is?
- What do you think Jesus' overall point is in this passage?
- What are the implications of this story on Holy Communion?

