

There are four people and two dogs in our household. Dan and I work outside the house, and Katie works a part-time job. Depending on the season AJ and Katie both play sports, I am in choir and handbells rehearsal once a week, Dan is at a session, building and grounds or Christian Education meeting, and during the summer AJ may be at a summer camp, or kids are off enjoying time off with friends, or just loafing around. One thing we all do in our house is eat and we try to make it a habit of eating together as a family as often as possible. Meaning that we sit down at the table together to eat...hopefully we are eating the same meal. As you may know, not everyone likes the same things...one kid won't eat fish, one won't eat any starchy vegetable, one adult doesn't like lentils or capers, and one of us doesn't care for steak.

I love food and I really like to cook. Cooking takes planning. I am a planner. About 200 days of the year I rise at 5:15am to feed dogs and prepare and pack lunches. Dan and I share dinner preparation depending on who is home first. We plan our meals for the upcoming week during the weekend (based on who is eating at home during the week). Mostly this approach works well for us given that Mondays, Tuesday and Wednesdays we are all typically eating home...AJ eats with his dad on Thursday nights, Thursday through Sunday Katie works. This past week, we had planned meals for all nights of the week...but then I found out at 4pm on Tuesday that Katie would not be home for dinner. So my plan was thrown off...but I was able to pivot. The three of us ate out after running an errand. So the planned Tuesday meal became the Wednesday meal because we had all the fresh ingredients that would inevitably expire by Wednesday at 7pm if we did not use them. On Thursday, Dan assumed that the originally planned Wednesday meal would just roll to Thursday, but that is not what I had planned for. I had planned for roasted cauliflower with burrata cheese and herbs for a vegetarian meal, because Katie works and AJ goes with dad for dinner on Thursday nights. At 5:38pm on Thursday night I call Dan from my office, in Johnston, to tell him I was preparing the leave...aka get the dinner going. He asks what we are having for dinner...annoyed I said we planned to have the roasted cauliflower. He asks where the recipe is, I direct him and I hang up. Uneasy at how the 5:38pm conversation went, at 6:04pm I call Dan again from the car, and he proceeds to tell me that he cannot make the cauliflower dish that I had planned for because we are out of fresh herbs: no basil, no cilantro- we used those yesterday. Annoyed I begin to debate why we cannot use the fresh basil from the plant in our kitchen. He says the recipe calls for 2/3 cup which would be all the leaves off the plant. Dan then tells me that he has already pivoted and has already salted the steak that was in the refrigerator...the steak was Friday's dinner plan. Now I am really agitated. I tell him I do not want steak. He asks if I want chicken because there is chicken he can make. I tell him I do not want chicken because I had chicken on my salad at the restaurant on Tuesday night, and I had chicken on my sandwich at the

luncheon on Wednesday and I ate chicken in my lunch salad on Thursday. If I eat anymore chicken this week, I will sprout feathers! Now Dan and I are at odds, and both are hungry and getting testy with each other. I ask if the fresh herbs are needed as part of the roasting preparation or just as garnish. He says he doesn't know because he has never made this before. Neither have I. I ask him to get the book out and read me the recipe, to which he says he is reading it, and tells me the recipe calls for the herbs as garnish at the end. I tell him to roast the cauliflower and I will stop at Dave's market in East Greenwich on the way home (it is now 6:18pm mind you) to get the fresh herbs. I am annoyed that I have to stop on the way home because all I want to do is go home. I get into the market and my attitude changes. I get the herbs we need and other items I know we will use for other meals...I am in my happy place- planning and grocery shopping. But I am also reflecting on the Gospel of John while I am shopping. I am relating to the shock and annoyance of the disciples when Jesus tells them "Feed these 5000 people". I am also reflecting on how I had little faith about a meal coming together. I am grateful that I have someone home cooking for me, and that my immediate physical needs are met. But I am also grateful that my spiritual needs are met by God.

And I realize these four truths:

1. God is always present. [God's presence can bring peace.]
2. All life and gifts come from God.
3. God can use our offerings, no matter how big or small.
4. Trust God, have faith in Jesus.

Last week we heard the story about Jesus feeding the 5000 in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 6:30-34 and 53-56). This week we will hear the same story as was told in the Gospel of John. *Note this and the resurrection are the only stories to be told in all 4 gospels (Matthew 14: 13-21; Mark 6:30-34; 53-56) Luke 9:10-17; and John 6: 1-21).

John 6

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), 2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. 4 The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, 9 “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

14 After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” 15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Jesus Walks on the Water

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, 17 where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. 18 A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles,[b] they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” 21 Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

I can only imagine the anxiety of the disciples. Is Jesus kidding? Feed 5000 men? Note-scholars believe that the people were on their way to the Temple as it is believed they were traveling for Passover, so it is believed that there were likely 5000 men and another 5-10k women and children for a total of around 15-20k people who needed to eat! To feed this many people would be very expensive, yet Jesus seems passive in asking the disciples to do so. Didn’t the people have a plan? Surely they knew the region well enough to know the land was barren.

The disciples are very factual with Jesus: it would take six months' wages to buy food enough to feed these people just one small bit of bread. And the only bread that they see is what a small Jewish boy has for his lunch: five barley loaves and two fish. How ever will they feed the crowd with that little bit? We know from the story the only thing in short supply is the faith of these disciples.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus is TESTING the disciples. Jesus already had a plan- He knew he was going to turn that measly amount of food into more than enough. He turned it into bread to feed the multitude plus 12 baskets of leftovers. He challenged the disciples to see if they had FAITH that He could do the seemingly impossible so easily and readily; without any preparation or advanced notice and with so little food.

John's Gospel is about faith. It is about having faith in the Lord always- during the uncertain and unplanned times, the stormy times- and during the planned and prepared for and quiet times. As Christians we must keep the faith that God is in the midst of all things.

John's Gospel reminds us of these four truths:

1. God is always present. [God's presence can bring peace.]
2. All life and gifts come from God.
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4. Trust God, have faith in Jesus.

John's Gospel passage, also made me reflect on my experience with the Pastoral Nominating Committee. Nine DCCCP members were called together to do the work of this church- to find a new pastor. We started our work on July 24, 2023. We had to create a Ministry Discernment Profile, which is a form, like a job posting, where we described who DCCCP is, what our values are, where we want to go in the future as a church, what is important to us in a pastor...all the answers to the questions had to be 1500 words or less. We had to describe all of the good works being done here and create interest for candidates as to why they should want to come to DCCCP. Did I mention we had to do this in 1500 words or less? We had to learn the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) app and the process, procedure and rules for searching for a pastor. We had to learn how to fill out forms using a brand new piece of software, we had to establish roles for PNC members, and agree to meeting days and times, and produce high definition pictures for advertising our church, and Presbytery liaisons had to be put in place and communicate with us about

the process and all of that was before we started the actual process of reviewing candidate submissions. And then we had to review candidate submissions, and watch countless hours of sermons just to determine whether or not we truly had an interest in a candidate. And we had to keep the congregation apprised of our work. At times, my faith waned- would we ever find and agree on a candidate? I think at times each member of the PNC's faith waned. And when that happened, we prayed, and we talked with each other, and we talked to God. We prayed for enough spiritual bread to feed us and to continue to sustain the congregation. We became anxious that congregation members would leave, just as the disciples likely lost followers of Jesus. But we also had to recenter ourselves and leave that to God to handle. We know that God loves all his people all of the time. And we know that God supplies all we need when we need it. God did supply gifts to us: he supplied fellowship, love, peace, and joy. God also supplied us with the candidate that was right for us by way of Rev Gin Courtney, whom we are so pleased to welcome to our home starting next week.

We know Rev. Gin will not come with all of the answers or guidance or direction we need for all of the challenges we are facing as a church, as members, as a society, but, we have faith as fellow Christians that we will work with each other, in faith in Jesus and in love and continue God's work in this place church, in this community and in our world. We know that there are many in our community who do not have faith in Jesus, who do not know the Lord, who do not know true love or peace. As Gin stated in her sermon, perhaps we are not comfortable evangelizing about what it means to be a member of this church or a Christian; but, as the hymn proclaims, "they will know we are Christians by our love."

And once again I reflect on these four truths:

1. God is always present. [God's presence can bring peace.]
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In closing, hear Jesus's lesson to be faithful, vulnerable, and loving Christians. Put your faith and love into action.

As St Teresa of Avila said: "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

