

August 4/5, 2007
There's Enough ... Always Enough
Mark 6:30-44
Rev. Susan Bresser

Our story begins with a staff meeting, everyone involved in providing care and ministry gives a report. Things have been busy, work has been hard, there's barely enough time to get a bite to eat, so the head of staff says to his team, "We need a break. Let's do a little weekend retreat, a little va-kay (vacation), and get some rest. And then we'll be rejuvenated and fresh for next week." They all agree ... this is a good idea.

So they make plans – this team of care providers – to head off to a remote place, a deserted place, a quiet place, a place where no one will bother them. A place that has nothing ... because they can't really go to a fun place, because fun places are full of crowds. The team needs to get away, and at this point, they don't care if it's deserted and dry ... they don't care if it's in the middle of nowhere.

But there's a leak, the location is made public and the place is quiet no more. Those who need care, love, attention, and healing have already arrived at the site long before the team of care providers.

The crowd has arrived. The va-kay is over. The crowd has arrived to find Jesus, the head of staff. The team of care-givers, the disciples, are disappointed. The retreat is cancelled.

The crowd has not come to get away from life; they have come because they are desperate to survive life. Jesus looks at them and quickly sees that they are helpless and hurting, "like sheep without a shepherd." Triage is established. People receive help.

After another long day of all work and no play, Jesus commands the team to prepare supper ... for everyone! The team is flabbergasted. "You're kidding. You can't be

serious. Where in the world are we going to get food out here ... in the middle of nowhere?"

As the team complains, Jesus orders everyone to get into groups and enables the team to feed the hungry crowd.

Jesus feeds the crowd in the middle of nowhere. Jesus feeds the crowd in the middle of nowhere. There is a place – a deserted, dry, lonely, empty place smack-dab in the middle of nowhere. And I'm not talking geography. I'm not talking about a place that you can locate on a map; I'm talking about a place you can probably locate in your soul. You've been there – in the middle of nowhere.

This past Wednesday evening, Brent was in the kitchen getting dinner ready ... I was in the kitchen watching Brent getting dinner ready, when John came running in. "There's breaking news on the TV. Something has happened in Minneapolis and it looks really bad." We kinda blew him off because we were having our own conversation ... "okay, thanks, we'll check it out later ..." It wasn't until later, after dinner, that we understood the seriousness of the breaking news. Brent was on-line checking his email and he called me into the office. We watched in horror the video of the I-35W Bridge falling into the Mississippi River.

Hundreds, if not thousands of people, were in the middle of nowhere. Even in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota on Wednesday evening, August 1, after 6:05pm, people had arrived in the middle of nowhere – alone, lost, empty, traumatized. I'm talking about everyone affected by this tragedy, finding that spot in their souls – the middle of nowhere.

It can happen in an instant. The middle of nowhere. That feeling of emptiness. It can happen at any time. A phone call in the night, a voice saying, "I've got some bad news," that will do it. You are alone, lost, empty and dry. The place where you lived so confidently is now the middle of nowhere.

I'm amazed at how scripture can speak to us – especially when we pay attention to it. And I'm a 'professional' and I'm still amazed. I think this scripture speaks to us right now in this place and in this time.

We've had some experience being in the middle of nowhere these past few weeks and that's why this scripture is so important. When we're stuck in the middle of nowhere is when Jesus has compassion for us. When we're lost, like sheep not knowing which path to take or not knowing which way to turn, Jesus comes to us. He teaches us, speaks to us, heals us and feeds us. Jesus feeds us, even in the middle of nowhere. And there's always enough, with some left over.

For some of you, it has happened here. You came here experiencing the middle of nowhere. You came empty. But then, at the words of the greeting, in the singing of the songs, in the words of the scripture, or while holding the hand of someone sitting next to you, you were filled. You came here today, you opened your empty hands, and you have been provided with nourishment.

Jesus feeds us, even in the middle of nowhere.

From the song *The Invitation*, by Steven Curtis Chapman:

This is your invitation
Come just the way you are
Come find what your soul has been longing for
Come find your peace
Come join the feast
Come in, this is your invitation.

Come and join the feast. The Shepherd, Jesus, has come to you and invites you to be filled. Even in the middle of nowhere, Jesus will feed you.