

Call to Worship

(based on Psalm 145:1-4)

Rise in body or spirit, and join in the *Call to Worship*.

One: We will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

All: We will proclaim you as God and King in the midst of our community.

One: Every day we will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever.

All: Your name is great, Lord, and worthy of this praise.

One: Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

All: Even so, in our worship and in our weekly living we will search out this greatness that we might know you, even if from afar.

One: One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

All: We gather today to retell your story so that our children and our children's children will know that you are also close at hand.

by Frank Ramirez, pastor
Union Center Church of the Brethren
Nappanee, IN
from SermonSuite.com

remain standing and let us sing #41

“Come, thou Almighty King”

Opening Prayer

With all your saints across the generations
we gather, Holy God,
to approach your mystery and hear your judgment.
We come seeking the faith of those
who have gone before us
in righteousness and truth.
Lead us by your Word
to walk in your ways
and observe your commandments. AMEN

Hymnal #672, by Lavon Bayler
from Refreshing Rains of the Living Word,
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Please be seated.

Matthew 14:13-21

Pete: With praise and thanksgiving this worship has begun. From here we head into *Good News* territory and what may be, for many of us, a very familiar story. It is found in all four Gospels. Perhaps we connect a little boy offering his lunch to the miracle in the story of Jesus feeding over 5,000 people. That detail is told only by John, who follows this episode with a lengthy emphasis on Jesus being the *Bread of Life*.

Matthew's version, like Mark's, begins with some dark thoughts. In the verses immediately before this, Jesus learns that his cousin, John the Baptist (not to be confused with John who wrote the fourth Gospel), has been killed by King Herod. John the Baptist was a firebrand preacher who spoke truth to power, and he paid the price for it. It's only natural that Jesus would need some 'alone time' to wrestle with this news, which is where our reading this morning begins. Unfortunately, he could not get away from the crowds – over 5,000 strong.

For the purpose of today's reading, you all will be his disciples, reading the story from their perspective. You are not the crowd to be fed. You are the ones who will be tasked with the responsibility of feeding them. Now, before we read, take a look at what you disciples will say to Jesus. *(forward ppt to the following:)*

“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.” ...

“We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.”

Take a moment to read the words silently.

Note that in the first statement, Jesus' disciples (i.e. you) are trying to **tell Jesus what to do**. The second statement expresses a negative fact – realistic and devoid of any imagination. It **lacks faith**. These statements are so “us,” for we often try to tell Jesus what to do, instead of the other way around. Furthermore, our faith can be smaller than a mustard seed.

(forward ppt to the next slide)

Okay? Now when the time comes, Janet will forward the *powerpoint* and you will speak the disciple's words, which are our words, also. Ready? Let's begin: Matthew 14:13-21

Gary: Now when Jesus heard this, 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. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said,

(forward ppt to the following:)

“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.”

(forward ppt to the next slide)

Gary: Jesus said to them,

Pete: “They need not go away; **you** give them something to eat.”

Gary: They replied,

(forward to the following:)

“We have nothing here but five loaves & two fish.”

(forward ppt to the next slide)

Gary: And he said,

Pete: “Bring them here to me.”

Gary: Then 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. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

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(idea for congregational reading from Carolyn C. Brown,
in her blog, “Worshiping With Children”)

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

by Gary Miller

As your treasurer, I have good news and bad news. The good news is we have enough money after all the bills are paid and all the outreach payments made to end the year with a budget surplus. Isn't that great? The bad news is it's still out there in your pockets.

I guess most of you have heard the story of Chicken Little, a little bird who after an acorn fell on its head, thought the sky was falling. There are many treasurers who are like that. They are constantly warning their congregations that if offerings aren't increased the church is in imminent danger of collapse.

I have never taken that approach, especially with our congregation. You all have over and over responded to the financial needs of the church, whether it be to purchase new furnaces, or just to wipe out our year-end financial deficit. But, given that, I feel it is my responsibility to at least apprise you of where we stand financially a little past the midpoint of the year.

As of today we have a negative balance of \$10,904 when measuring General Offerings received versus expenses paid. This compares to a similar period from last year of a negative balance of \$3,731.

We have just heard the story from Matthew of the loaves and fishes. This story shows us that much can be made out of a little. I would like to challenge our congregation to perform our own loaves and fishes story over the last half of the year. Dig a little deeper so that we can fulfil all the commitments we have made this year. With your generosity, I am confident that we can do as we have in the past.

Will the ushers please come forward and collect our tithes and offerings?

Offertory Video

“Kid’s Bible History - Feeding of the 5000”

<https://youtu.be/PbXMOL8ZZI0>

Psalm 17: 1-7, 15

Pete: From the familiar story of the feeding of the 5,000, as told through the eyes of children, we now turn to the *prayer and song book* of the Bible. As we heard last week from the apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit helps us to pray, for we are often at a loss for words when it comes to talking with God. The Spirit, he wrote, speaks for us through our sighs and groans. Indeed, as followers of Jesus, we are blessed in this way. However, when it comes to prayer, we also have an entire book of prayers to explore and use.

This morning, we turn to the first half of Psalm 17, a prayer for help. Personal enemies have been making life extremely difficult for the one originally writing these words, who could have been King David. Even today we wrestle with persons who tell lies about us, stab us in the back, or try to trip us up, sometimes with a smile on their face. This prayer, as paraphrased by an Australian pastor, makes God the wrestling partner. *Make things right, Lord. Help me.* The reading jumps ahead to the last verse, which ends with an affirmation: “I will rise to a new day.”

Listen.

Gary:

Give me a fair hearing, LORD;
pay attention to my plea.

Listen to what I have to say,
for I speak without a word of a lie.

I want you to be the one who declares me innocent,
for you always see things as they really are.

Put me under the microscope and see what I'm made of;
make a snap inspection anytime of day or night.

Cross examine me as thoroughly as you wish;
there are no skeletons in my closet;
I've got nothing to hide
and no tracks to cover.

I don't just conform to what others do, LORD;
I take my cues from what you've said.
I have avoided straying down the path of violence,
and kept my feet firmly on the tracks you've shown.

I am calling to you, God,
because I know you will help.

Tune in to what I have to say
and hear me out.

Put your rock-solid love on display for all to see.
You are the one who rescues and shelters
those who seek asylum from violent persecution.

I know I will be proved innocent;
I will be able to hold my head up
and look you in the eye.
I will rise to a new day, filled with your presence.

from the *Laughing Bird* version
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Sharing a joy, a concern,
a word of testimony or praise

Hymn

“Pass me not, O gentle Savior”

Pastoral Prayer

Gentle Savior, you have heard our humble cries, spoken or unvoiced, concerning the needs of others, or for our own well-being. We are grateful for what we have seen thus far of your faithfulness, knowing that our eyes have limits, and even our prayerful imaginations only go so far. We trust, O Lord, that even before our concerns and anxieties are expressed openly, you are deeply involved.

We believe that you are working for the good of our brothers and sisters in Nigeria, along with their neighbors – all them being your children. We trust that your hand is there with our sister as she deals with cancer and her own mortality. We're grateful that she knows where and in whom her future lies. We believe that your arms encircle those who grieve all along their journey.

Your Spirit moves in us, we believe, as we seek to continue the work of Jesus here and now: simply, peacefully, together. We trust in your forgiveness when we stumble over our own selfishness or care-less-ness, knowing that you reach out and help us to rise and walk by faith. Motivate and empower us to do the same to and with others, even when they blunder all over us.

Keep leading us forward toward your kingdom, not backward to the 'good old days.' Help us not to give into evil, but to – instead – be agents of your transformation, ambassadors of your reign, makers of peace.

All this, and much more, we pray in the name of the One who revealed (and still reveals) your way, who embodied your truth, who did the hard work of salvation – dying upon the cross, and who rose from death, that we might ourselves “*rise to a new day, filled with your presence.**”
AMEN

*Psalm 17:15 - *Laughing Bird* version

Genesis 32:22-31

(NRSV)

Message:

“Face time... out of joint”

Hymn #577

“O Love that will not let me go”

Benediction

May God continue to uphold you along your journey.

May the Lord be there,

wherever your “Jabbok river” may lie,

wrestling with you

through your “out of joint” times,

as a partner, not an enemy.

May you awake and arise to a new day,

emboldened to step out by faith

into whatever tomorrow awaits,

knowing that you are never alone.

Amen.

Postlude