

# Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

**Eighth Sunday after Pentecost – July 18, 2021**

*“And he began to teach them many things.” (Mark 6:34)*

The Christian faith does not come easily or naturally to us. We must be taught to be a Christian, or as some say, faith must be “caught.” We submit to God’s Word for teaching and we learn what it means to be Christians.

At the end of Matthew’s Gospel (28:19), Jesus says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Jesus commands us to teach. No one is born with knowing the gospel, you can’t just “think it up” on your own. Someone has to teach it to you and someone has to preach it in your hearing in order for the good news of Jesus Christ to be yours as a free gift.

After an outburst of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:42, the church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.” Being a disciple of Jesus is not the same as being a sensitive, caring, or “good” person. It’s not enough to say, “I was born in the US, which is basically Christian, so I became a Christian by breathing the air and drinking the water.” The saving news of Jesus Christ is opposite of the way the world saves. Disciples are those who have heard the good news of Jesus Christ, are transformed by the Holy Spirit, who then live in a world counter to the ways of the world.

One of the titles for Jesus is “rabbi,” which means teacher. Jesus traveled through villages teaching. Now the disciples come back and report to Jesus about their mission and he says to them, “Let’s get away and rest a while.” They go to the desert but when they get there it is anything but deserted. Jesus begins to teach the crowd and satisfies their hunger with a miracle of fish and bread. Isn’t it interesting that the first thing Jesus does for the people is not feed, but rather teach?

The crowds see themselves as hungry and in need of bread. Jesus sees them in need of teaching, and before Jesus meets their physical needs, he meets their need for instruction, explanation, and teaching. Perhaps Mark, by telling the story, means to remind us that there is a hunger for bread but also for “every word spoken by God.”

Jesus feeds us our daily bread, but he also gives us the spiritual bread which is God’s holy Word. Amen.

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