

still waters

home church studies

Psalm 17.1-7, 15

[Worship]

1 Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit. 2 From you let my vindication come; let your eyes see the right. 3 If you try my heart, if you visit me by night, if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me; my mouth does not transgress. 4 As for what others do, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. 5 My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped. 6 I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me, hear my words. 7 Wondrously show your steadfast love, O savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. 15 As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.

Consider:

[Think & Pray...]

Confronted with evening's advent, the disciples survey the crowds, observe the isolation of their surroundings, and start digging around in their pockets. Five loaves and two fish won't go very far. Briefly they panic, kick themselves for failing to anticipate a longer, more populous journey than they'd set out for, then stumble upon a solution: Send the crowds back into the villages to buy food, before they notice how hungry they've gotten.

Jesus doesn't let them off that easily. His words "you give them something to eat" force them to confront their deepest fear—soon the crowds will realize what inadequate people they truly are. The threat of being exposed—as lacking somehow—is compounded by the threat of the disgust awaiting us when the ones we've deceived—in the disciples' case, Jesus—realize that we've fooled them into loving us. The day of their calling, they must have appeared unusually smart and of good courage.

Chances are, you think you are the only one who lives in this fear of being found out. That sense of ourselves comes from the same economy of scarcity that makes us fret over how to stretch bread and fish, our selves, and our love. In the face of such want, and of our own failings and limitations, it seems utterly foolhardy to trust in God's abundant gifts, laid out before us and coursing through our veins. Yet this is the presumption God commends us to embody. While we run around readying ourselves—acquiring the right skills, the right personality, the right spirituality—God is busy calling us as we are now to become his body distributed in the world.

Jesus thanks God for the bread and fish, then breaks and distributes it to the crowd. So, too, Jesus thanks God for us, then breaks and distributes us to the world.



[The Scripture]

Genesis 32.13-21

22 The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. 24 Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." 27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." 31 The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.