



**Trinity Church Wall Street 11:15am Holy Eucharist – Trinity Sunday
The Rev. Kristin Miles Transcript**

“Engage. Hinge. Sit. Repeat.”

We may not realize it, but the story of Jesus feeding the multitudes is something we encounter each time we come to church. Mother Kristin reminds us that when we come together to pray for the hungers of humanity and partake in the Eucharist, we are, in fact, also laying a path to meet the needs of the world –and those we share a pew with– head on. The readings are 2 Samuel 11: 1-15, Psalm 14, Ephesians 3: 14-21, and John 6: 1-15.

Sermon Transcript:

In the name of God, Father, son, and Holy Spirit.

Last week Father Michael's three themes based on the scriptures were rest, movement, compassion. I loved that combination of words. Rest, movement, compassion. From this Sunday's passages, I propose another three words for us to focus on. Engage, hinge, sit. Engage. We begin with our reading from 2 Samuel. I think we can all agree that Netflix has nothing on the Bible. All the various carnal pursuits, political intrigues, and family dynamics have been on display for millennia. Most significantly, it doesn't take long for us to see that 2 Samuel frowns upon people being armchair generals. Complaint about King David is written into the very first line of our reading that Toni read. In the spring of the year, the time when kings go into battle. What irony, as scholar Robert Alter has pointed out, King David is not going into battle. He is remaining in Jerusalem, sending his servants and all Israel to ravage amen while he sleeps in. It says in the text, "Late one afternoon when David rose from his couch," finally waking up is the implied tone. This episode is not a moral parable so much tsk tsk-ing David as it is concerned with the institutionalization of the monarchy.

It is concerned that David is now a sedentary King, removed from the field of action, endowed with a dangerous amount of leisure time. David is constantly operating through the agency of others to take on leadership and service. We hear an echo of 2 Samuel's concern in our Ephesians and Gospel of John readings; a warning against using the agency of others rather than one's own. Jesus asks, "What are we to feed them with? Where are we to buy them bread?" Challenges the engagement of his disciples. Then Jesus, in contrast to David, takes the initiative of service, indicating his concern that the people be fed. The scriptures are clear. We are not to be like David, discharging our responsibility onto others to respond to dangers and hungers. But it can be overwhelming. This meeting of need, this responding to the concerns of the world and others. The first three chapters of Ephesians invite us into what can be called a hinge between the engagement of meeting the needs of others and prayer.

The first few chapters of Ephesians describe what God has done by gathering up all things in Christ. This is hinged with the last three chapters of the epistle and instructing readers about what they are called to do in response. The meeting point, our passage from Ephesians 3 is itself the prayer for us. In this prayer, it links and hinges 2 Samuel's critique with that big need we hear about in John. Paul prays for our hearts such beautiful language in this passage that Sharon read, that you, that we may be strengthened in our inner being with power through the Spirit that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are being rooted and grounded in love. Paul prays for our minds that the church

can grasp that this grace is utterly massive and awesome beyond adequate imagining this love is cosmically immense. The breadth, and length, and height, and depth of it. Then Paul blesses us. The power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can imagine. We engage because we don't have to do this alone. We do it with God working within us and we do it in community. In fact that we're churches in this passage, Paul says this is why we have the church.

The church is the hinge between agency or engagement and nourishment from God; to do this work beyond what we can imagine to meet what seems impossible. As one commentator expressed it, the comprehension Paul desires for the Ephesians, for us, is not some esoteric knowledge on the part of individual initiates. Not some isolated contemplation, but the shared insight belonging to a community of believers, the shared inside that happens when we come together. Where are we to buy bread for these people? Margaret Guenther, in her book, "Notes from a Sojourner," offers a helpful riff on the response to this question. Where are we to buy bread for these people? Guenther says, "Jesus turns to his friends. When I put myself in the story, he is turning to us and asks, how many loaves do you have? What do you have that I can work with? What do you have that we can, together, use to pull off a miracle? How can we manage some holy sleight of hand that will baffle the literal minded for centuries. "I can picture myself," Guenther continues, "standing among his friends, avoiding looking him in the eye as I mumble, I haven't anything anyone would want really nothing worth giving. I haven't anything you could use except."

We all know that facing need is scary and perhaps this is why all the Gospels except for Luke, pair the feeding of the thousands right after with the terror of the disciples seeing Jesus. This fear from facing hungry masses of people still hasn't quite been resolved, still hasn't quite been reconciled in them. Meeting needs involves fears. It is only that the disciples are able to see the holy together that they are able to reach the other shore. We need community to face need to know that we will not be flooded. Jesus saw he engaged, but he did his engagement hinged with prayer. In Jewish custom the head of the household says the blessing over the bread. In our story, Jesus took what was there, blessed it, gave it. Sit, "make the people sit down," Jesus says. Actually the Greek word that Jesus uses is an instruction for people to recline as if at a meal. Jesus is brilliant. He has everyone sit. If there are a lot of people and you are asked to sit down, there's going to be some shifting, some eye contact, some scooching, some moving of baskets or bags or whatever people brought with them, thousands of people following the instruction to sit down together. Who knows how this sparked a realization of connection and possibility?

It's hard when we are standing to let the weight of our bodies relax. It's hard to see what's really at the bottom of our bags unless we can put them down and they open up and we dig around a little, oh yeah, I only ate half this loaf. Here are a couple of figs. This pouch has a few more dried fish left in it. We come here each week for a meal. Jesus tells us to sit, take a weight off. If you are here in church, make eye contact as you move over and sit down. When we say the prayers of the people we place before God, the hungers of humanity. May we find echoing back the words, what do you have? We engage, hinge with prayer. Sit down for the fellowship meal. We'll remember Paul's blessing that the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine. I saw an op-ed in a paper a few years ago and the title of the editorial was, stopping climate change is hopeless. Let's do it. The voice of the writer said this, we could order in Chinese and lock ourselves in the closet, but we shouldn't, because there's good news. We are perfect for the job. If the human species specializes in one thing, it's taking on the impossible. We engage, we hinge with prayer, we sit, and repeat.

Amen.