

Beyond Week 3 Impact of Ministry

By Derek Steinacher

Sometimes I'm worried that as I've grown older, that I've gotten more apathetic to the needs of the world, the concerns of the people around me. I worry that possibly I show less interest or enthusiasm or concern, as I once did. Here's why I say that. When I was in late high school and early college, I was in a Bible study led by my youth pastor and my youth pastor and his wife.

They were delivering their first baby. And as they delivered their first baby, they met a delivery nurse who had a rare type of cancer. One that would require an expensive treatment. Half \$1 million. And it wasn't covered by insurance. The Lincoln Journal star picked up the story and told the powerful, powerful story of her and her family, and then a local marketing agency picked up the story and put it on a website.

And, the two leaders of the marketing agency committed to wearing a pink t shirt with the name of the web address across it until the money was raised. This was the pre social media days. So this is just how you went about it with a pink t shirt and a website. Right. And so, my first year, my freshman year at college, I committed to wearing that, pink t shirt every single day.

I had multiple, I had multiple t shirts. I didn't wear the same t shirt every day, but I committed to wearing that t shirt every day. And a lot of, the other guys in the Bible study, did the same. Friends of ours at college joined in and started wearing the t shirt. We hosted benefit concerts, A5K, we helped, spread the word, and sell more t shirts.

And I think I'm a generous person, but when I compare myself to that all out attitude that I had back then, I wonder, am I a little less passionate as I've grown older? Do I have the same zeal and enthusiasm as I once had, or as I've grown older? Learn more about the complexities of the systems we create in the world.

Learn more about the seemingly infinite problems and hurts and injustices that people face. Seeing prayers go unanswered. Is my heart a little more closed off than it used to be? And my guess is maybe you know what it's like to grow a little more apathetic as well. Looking back and wondering if you have the same enthusiasm and passion and heart as you once did.

Like Pastor Mandy said, this is Ministry Sunday. We're in a series called beyond. Last Sunday was Gratitude Sunday. This Sunday is called Ministry Sunday, and as I look at

Ministry, one of the things I know that it takes to do ministry is people with willing and open hearts. We're going to look at a story of that today.

Today we're going to look at the only one of Jesus's miracles that was recorded in all all four of the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all include this story in their, writings about Jesus's life. And this is a story where the disciples, I'm sure they were very glad that they were open to not missing this moment.

The miracle was the feeding of the 5000. The exact location where this would have taken place is not completely certain, but it may have been near the northern shore of the sea of Galilee. The top body of water here, possibly a mile or so west of where the Jordan and, river enters the sea. It was one year before Jesus's death, and the passing crowds at this time were on their way to Jerusalem for Passover.

Jesus himself. They were heading from the top body of water down to the bottom body of water. Jesus himself was not going to Jerusalem for this Passover, because the last time he was there, there had been a plot for him to kill him. But the passing crowds would have been on this, journey for miles and miles.

100 mile walk, 228,000 steps. And it was in this context, as the crowds were passing on their way to Jerusalem, that Jesus would do one of his most marvelous miracles. We're going to read about it in Mark. If you want to follow along, we're going to be in Mark 630. Mark says the apostles return to Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught.

Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat. He said to the apostles, come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while. They departed in a boat by themselves for a deserted place. I don't know what it's like to be well-known or, famous, but sometimes I imagine, or often times, if you're well known or famous, it's probably nice to get away to a secluded place.

My brother Kyle ran into Marshawn Lynch, the NFL running back in the Charlotte airport once, and he was super excited to see him. And so he went up to him and he said before he could even finish the sentence, can I get a picture with you? Halfway through the sentence, Marshawn Lynch said no. And, went to the back of a restaurant bar and probably tried to hide away from the crowds in the airport.

The crowds here certainly would have known who Jesus was. Many people saw them leaving and recognize them, so they ran ahead from all the cities and arrived before them. So just as Jesus and the disciples are anticipating some rest, it all goes horribly wrong. And this was a stressful period, for the disciples. And Jesus. Jesus had just been rejected in his own hometown, the one who led the way for Jesus.

John the Baptist had just been killed, and now the only time the disciples and Jesus would end up having to themselves was a short boat ride from one side of the shore to the other. By the time they arrived to the other shore, everyone else had gotten their first. But the disciples couldn't have guessed what Jesus was going to do or say next.

They were so eager for something, but they maybe didn't even know what. When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.

What the disciples saw was that Jesus would end up responding with deep human compassion. If you ever think your concerns are too small for God, remember that even in this period, he had compassion for the crowds. Mark's comment here, raises the growing awareness of what had been on Jesus's mind. He saw a leaderless and king list people.

Mark continues, late in the day, his disciples came to him and said, this is an isolated place and it's already late in the day. Send them away so we can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy something to eat for themselves. Jesus replied, you give them something to eat. If you're going to underline six words today, or if you're only going to tune in to me for six words today, those are the six words you give them something to eat.

It's an invitation that Jesus gives us to be part of his ministry. You give them something to eat. But they said to him, should we go off and buy bread? We're worth almost eight months pay and give it to them to eat. I imagine at least a couple of the disciples were type A in personality, right? Probably the tax collectors.

And they started calculating right away like this makes you want us to give like half a year's pay or eight months pay. There's thousands of people here if we're going to give them something to eat. That's a lot of money that's impractical. Which makes me wonder, how often does God invite us into something? And we respond with, I can't do that because, like.

Jesus said to them, how much bread do you have? Take a look. After checking they said, five loaves of bread and two fish. I brought five loaves of bread today. It did not bring two fish. I figured only the people online would probably appreciate if I brought fish into this room. But, I have the five loaves of bread here.

This is what the disciples had. He directed Jesus, directed the disciples to see all the people in groups, as though they were having a banquet on the green grass. They sat down in the groups of hundreds and 50s. He took the five loaves and the two fish looked up to heaven, bless them, broke them, broke the loaves into pieces, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people.

He also divided the two fish among them all, everyone, eight until they were full, they filled 12 baskets with the leftover pieces of bread and fish. About 5000 had eaten. There's not many details in the Gospels, but here it points out that the grass was green, meaning it was late winter, early spring or springtime. I noticed that here in Lincoln this week I saw people mowing, and then the next day was a blizzard.

And then the next day it was like the grass is still a little green, right? For us, it's a reminder that it's Easter time. Right? It's almost going to be Easter time at this time. It would have been a celebration of Passover around this time of year. And that was a reminder to these people that their ancestors, when they were slaves in Egypt, God rescued them.

And bread had always been significant. If Passover, as the Israelite people fled, they didn't have time to bake bread and have it rise. Bread was regarded as a gift from God. They would always pick up the leftover pieces, and when they picked up so many leftovers, they were amazed by Jesus. They wanted him to be their king immediately.

And so Jesus took the bread. He broke it and blessed it. And as we know now, and they would know a year later, this bread was about to take on a brand new significance.

In this story, Jesus did not create something from nothing. Rather, he multiplied the generosity of the disciples. Jesus had compassion on the crowds and he took action with the bread and the fish. N.T. Wright says, God's kingdom is not simply a matter of power, but also of overflowing love. And the two here go arm in arm, and the people in the crowd witnessed a miracle.

I'm unsure of how this would have unfolded. Some of them probably wouldn't have been paying attention, but some of them certainly would have picked up that something special was happening. As this bread was distributed to each of them. And I imagine the disciples were confused and like, whoa! And I'm glad we gave Jesus this bread. They didn't miss the invitation.

This passage is a reminder that each of us is invited to be part of Jesus's ministry. We don't focus on our own resources and what they can achieve. We do focus on and trust Jesus and what he can do with our resources. When we are faithful with what we do have. At first here, the disciples were focused on what they couldn't do because of what they didn't have.

But Jesus was focused on what could be done with the little they did have. If it's something he wants done, he will accomplish it and I need to be part of it. The good news here is if you feel like you don't have it together, you don't have enough or you aren't enough. God uses our weaknesses. Paul would say it like this.

He said, but he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. We too often limit what we can't do, what we can do based on our shortcomings. If the church focuses on what we don't have, then miracles don't happen.

So the disciples gave what they did have and what Jesus asked them for five loaves and two fish. And then God did what only God can do. You give them something to eat. Each of us is content. Is invited into Jesus's continued ministry in the world today, and this is happening all over the world. It's happening in our church.

It's happening in other churches in our city. It's happening across our state, in every state, in every country, and in every continent on the earth. Jesus continues to invite people to participate in his ministry today, the question comes down to, how does our church fit into the ministry that God is doing in the world? Are we making a difference here?

I liked the video at the beginning of service that highlighted three important components of ministry that we're doing worship, discipleship, and mission or outreach. Worship. The purpose of worship is to spend time with those that we love to love and appreciate and honor God. Sometimes we do this individually, but often we do it together as a community.

It's so important to participate in worship and it horizons. We do that in so many different ways for every single age. And that starts in Discovery Zone. Our children's ministry for birth through fourth graders. Every single Sunday, our our kids, in Discovery zone, our way of ministry gather together in one room to sing songs together in worship.

This continues in diffusion, our fifth through eighth grade ministry. Every single Sunday, fusion gathers, right back here. If you ever notice a bunch of students standing back there, that's our fifth or eighth grade students infusion. And before they go back for a time of teaching in small groups, they spend time worshipping together with each of you.

Earlier this month, we went on our fusion retreat to Kansas City. This is a picture. I always love getting away on our fusion retreat. Matt, who led the band today, came down on the trip with us and led a time of worship, and we just kind of fill this small room. It's an acoustic. Acoustic worship set with a bunch of fifth or eighth graders, and you can just hear their voices singing out these songs to God.

Before the last session, someone last minute requested that Matt play light of the world, a VBS favorite here at horizons. And so he just he just did it. And, and a room full of fifth year eighth graders singing an acoustic version of a VBS song was a pretty cool worship experience. It, continues into a rise.

Our ninth through 12th grade ministry, who had spent the weekend on Project Serve serving other or local organizations this weekend here in Lincoln, as an act of worship continues into, our college age life group and of course, our worship services every Sunday where we have prayer and teaching and baptism and communion. And maybe for you, one of the most, meaningful is the songs.

We have an amazing worship team here, horizons, that leads us into worship every single Sunday. Staff and volunteers, both on stage and back in the booth that help to lead us into worship. Worship is a reminder that we're in this together as a family, and worship is a ministry that Jesus invites us, the church, into today. And those who worship God naturally grow closer to God.

Growing as apprentices of Jesus. I've seen this happen so many times in life groups at horizons. Many times when someone at horizons is going through a crisis, it's members of either their own life group or another life group who are the friends and family that embody God's love and care for them. I see this happening in classes at horizons, the Spiritual Practices class, the Disciple Bible Study class.

I see it happening in arise small groups for ninth through 12th graders or Fusion or Discovery Zone kids, and to grow as an apprentice of Jesus involves our hands, our head, and our hearts. It involves our hands putting things into action. It involves our head actually learning and studying what Jesus was like so that we can continue to remind ourselves.

And it involves our hearts. And that leads to that last category of, ministries that the video highlighted, which is mission or outreach. Horizons has some amazing ministries in this regard. We have our hand in hand ministry, which is a partnership with Zeeman Elementary. We're going to show a video here in just a little bit highlighting this impact.

Full ministry. We have a new partnership with Connection Point, a United Methodist Church, in Lincoln, an old United Methodist Church building that's now a food pantry on Tuesdays and Thursdays, where a group of Harrison's people, are getting ready to partner with a refugee family that's part of that ministry. And make sure they're welcome and connected in Lincoln, of course.

Project Hope, if you've been around horizons for a while. Just a month ago, we celebrated project Hope, our international mission, supporting two children's homes in India. And, last month we celebrated that this has been a ministry of this church for 20 years now, we've just crossed over giving \$1 million to help kids in India who otherwise may not have a safe place to stay, or food to ensure that they have those important things in their lives.

And we have Justice in Action, a ministry where we partner with 30 other churches and faith communities across Lincoln to make sure that the systems that are in place are not the

things that are hurting people. We want to make sure we're helping all people in Lincoln, and many of these ministries have come out of the visions or passions of individuals in our church.

They've been fueled by worship and discipleship, and the individuals who put these ministries into action invite others to do the same with them, and they've turned into church wide efforts. One last category of outreach that I want to talk about, that we don't talk about as often here, is our connection with the United Methodist Church. Horizons is a United Methodist Church, and we're part of a district of 70 United Methodist churches in the southeast part of, Nebraska.

We're one of the bigger churches among that bunch. Most of those 70 churches are in smaller towns. In smaller towns around the southeast part of Nebraska. And we're part of a conference, 700 United Methodist churches in Nebraska and Kansas. And one of the things that all 700 of our churches do is we give a portion of our offering to what's called, what's called a mission share.

Some of this offering goes some of this offering is there is actually

Each of our 700 churches in Nebraska and Kansas gives a portion of the offering that we collect to what's called a mission share. And so, one of the things that those mission shares go to is, core the United Methodist Committee on Relief, which makes sure that when disaster strikes, fires in Oklahoma, fires and LA hurricanes in Florida, that there's a response.

And we're part of that together with all of these other churches, our 700 churches, part of our mission shares go to grants that, help people who are exploring a call in a ministry and serving one of these churches. We provide education and self care for clergy. One of the programs we support through our mission shares is called the transition into Ministry Program.

It's, is for pastors who are primarily 35 and younger. It gives them leadership development, focusing on character skills and competencies through cohorts and the fruit of that ministry. The transition in a ministry program is effective leadership for churches across our states. I'm specifically drawn to that program because horizons got to go through one of the cohort like experiences.

We weren't part of the program, but we've got to go through one of the, cohorts to do our vision process here at the church. And it was such a rich and spirit filled process. It's led by Ashley Alli Crawford, who's a member of our church and on the staff at the conference. All of this important ministry, worship and discipleship and mission is ministry that Jesus invites us into today.

And it's led by people, not people who just have extra time on their hands. It's led by people who make time for this important work, and it's fueled by people who give, people who give generously and make a plan for their giving. My, my great grandfather died when my grandpa was very young. My grandpa was just a child.

When his dad passed away. My great grandpa passed away in 1940. I remember my grandpa wrote him a note as a child. And even as I was a kid, he had this handwritten note. He was old enough to write it, but his his, sentences curved up the page. He kept that framed in his office. But one of the things I have is my great grandpa's old, he was a seventh day Adventist preacher, and so he.

I have three of these old, notebooks with handwritten notes of his. And, as well as some, like, print, print from the denomination. He was part of. And one of the things I found in here, was this quote, systematic and liberal giving in accordance with the plan, keeps the channel of the heart open. Systematic meaning, having a plan on how you give and, liberal giving meaning.

Generous giving, not just a small amount, systematic and liberal giving in accordance with the plan keeps the channel of the heart open. We place ourselves and we place ourselves in connection with God, that he may use us as channels through which his gifts may flow to others. I imagine as the disciples gave these five loaves of bread and saw what Jesus did with them, that they felt like channels through which God's gifts may flow to others.

I'm sure the feeling was special, like I just got to be part of that. The disciples didn't know this verse, but Paul would have known about this miracle, when he wrote years later, Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine as a channel for God's gifts. You get to be part of something.

We get the opportunity to say yes, to be part of God's ministry. Through our love, we get to help people see his heart and hear his voice. I want you to check out this video from Christy Shurmur.

Kristi Schirmer:

I'm Kristi Schirmer. Our family has been attending horizons since, I believe 2008. I am a principal with the Lincoln Public Schools.

I received a phone call at school from Horizons Church to see if our elementary school, zoom in elementary, was interested in exploring a partnership. And, that partnership grew from just the concept of maybe an Easter basket to getting books into the hands of kids, to, volunteering at our annual carnival.

And something as simple as a phone call to our school led to a partnership that I believe still thrives and is growing today. While a principal at Zaman, I noticed one day one of my students came to school, and her, fingertips had some burns on them. And we asked her what happened, and she shared with us that their electricity was out.

This was during January and February time of the year when it was very, very cold. Mom and the young children in the family didn't have heat.

I spent my afternoon attempting to find resources for the family. I don't know why I didn't think of horizons. But I didn't know at the time that we had some emergency funds that could possibly help a family like this that's in need.

I called horizons, I asked if there was any way, any amount that to help and horizons within a half an hour paid that bill for that family. And, I know you as a church never get to see the outcome of that or the outcome of the dollars that you provide aid for types of situations like this. But I'm on the front lines and I get to see that.

And it was, a mother who hugged me and thanked me and asked me to thank the community as well for stepping up and helping her family.

When my husband TJ, and I thought about our campaign donation, my husband working in the architectural engineering world, knows the infrastructure needs support. Here at horizons, we need to fix things that, aren't as fun and exciting.

What better way? And what better place to, share our donation than with horizons, where we know it's going to support that infrastructure, but also, invest in people. So, church, will you join me Beyond the Horizon?

Derek:

That's the kind of impact I want to have. And my guess is that's the kind of impact you want to have, and that's the impact you are having through worship and discipleship and ministry. The church is not a building. The building is just a tool. At the end of the day, the reason that churches have impact is because of the people.

You give them something to people not doing life their way. People surrender to Jesus's way of doing life. You give them something to eat. And as Jesus gives you that invitation, my hope is that your short answer is just yes. But if you want to prepare your heart to have your answer be yes, my hope is that your prayer is the Wesley Covenant Prayer that we can pray here together.

You can pray silently as I read these words. I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will place me, with whom you will put me to doing. Put me to suffering. Let me be

put to work for you, or set aside for you. Let me be full. Let me be empty. Let me have all things.

Let me have nothing. I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory in service. And now a wonderful and holy God, creator, Redeemer, sustainer, you are my and I am yours. So be it. In the covenant which I had made on earth, let it be also made in heaven. Amen. The concerns we face in our community may be overwhelming, and it may feel like we aren't enough or don't have enough to do anything about it. But when we give to Jesus, the little that we do have. He is able to do miraculous things.