

Faith Bible Study Guide
For the Week of March 8, 2026
Third Sunday in Lent
“Tell Me Something Good: The Good News is...
Together, the Impossible is Possible”



Be still [2 Minutes]: As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

CENTERING WORDS/ WORDS TO PONDER: Poem by Rev. Sarah Speed

Surely, This Must Be It

Everyone has a job. I wash the potatoes, filling the sink with slivers of potato peel. You brine the turkey, hovering by the oven all afternoon. Someone sets the table, taking care to fill a vase with asters and marigolds, sprigs of holly and shoots of evergreen. We play music while we prepare. “What The World Needs Now is Love”¹ comes on. We can’t get it out of our heads. We whistle along to Dionne all afternoon. And eventually, the doorbell rings.

You’ve invited the neighbors, the grad student who sits on the second row at church, the widower in the choir. We add seats to the table. We go around the room and share one thing we’re grateful for. Eyes well as we create a laundry list of beauty. The kids get squirmy, but we’re grateful for that too.

*And then we eat! We scoop whipped potatoes and crisp green beans with fresh garlic. We pass the bread basket, leaving crumbs all over the table. They are tiny reminders of communion in our midst. And at the end of the night, when we walk our guests to the car and carry sleeping children to their car seats, our neighbors say, **What a holy moment it all was.** Surely this must be what heaven feels like. Surely we can create it together.*

OPENING PRAYER: *Holy God, we could press our ear to the page, hoping to hear you more clearly. We could silence all the alarms and notifications, hoping to catch a murmur of your voice. So today we pray, open up space in our hearts, in our spirits, in our minds,*

to feel your presence among us. With you, anything is possible. We believe. Help our unbelief. Amen.

Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]

1. Take a breath. Feel your body in the chair. How is it with your soul today?

Feel free to answer several questions (or briefly all)...

2. This week's news has felt heavy for many people. How is your soul holding that weight right now? What emotions have been sitting with you lately?

3. Do you remember the story about the doctor and the child, what part of the story stirred something in your heart? Where did you notice hope or goodness?

4. Have you experienced a moment recently when someone's small act of kindness or care made a difference for you or someone else? What happened?

5. Right now, does your soul feel more shaped by scarcity ("there's not enough") or by trust that God can multiply what we share? Why?

Lent invites honesty, not performance.

Be the Word: Scripture Lesson: Mark 6:32-44; Ephesians 3:20-21

Mark 6:32-44

32 *They departed in a boat by themselves for a deserted place.*

33 *Many people saw them leaving and recognized them, so they ran ahead from all the cities and arrived before them. **34** 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.*

35 *Late in the day, his disciples came to him and said, "This is an isolated place, and it's already late in the day. **36** Send them away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy something to eat for themselves."*

37 *He replied, "You give them something to eat."*

But they said to him, "Should we go off and buy bread worth almost eight months' pay[a] and give it to them to eat?"

38 *He said to them, "How much bread do you have? Take a look."*

After checking, they said, "Five loaves of bread and two fish."

39 *He directed the disciples to seat all the people in groups as though they were having a banquet on the green grass. **40** They sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. **41** He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed 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. **42** Everyone ate until they were full. **43** They filled twelve baskets with the leftover pieces of bread and fish. **44** About five thousand had eaten.*

Ephesians 3:20-21

20 *Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; **21** glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen.*

L: The word of God for all People.

P: Thanks be to God.

Be rooted: [Bible Study]

The Series at a Glance

Lent

ASH WED	1ST SUN IN LENT	2ND SUN IN LENT	3RD SUN IN LENT	4TH SUN IN LENT	5TH SUN IN LENT
The good news is... all are invited	The good news is... so good it catches us by surprise	The good news is... great love for God and neighbor	The good news is... together, the impossible is possible	The good news is... protection and care for the vulnerable	The good news is... rooted in justice, mercy, and faithfulness
<u>Luke 14:15-24</u> (Parable of the wedding banquet)	<u>John 2:1-11</u> (Wedding at Cana) <u>Matthew 13:31-32</u> (Parable of the mustard seed)	<u>Luke 7:36-50</u> (Woman with the alabaster jar washes Jesus' feet) <u>Matthew 25:35-40</u> (“Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me”)	<u>Mark 6:32-44</u> (Feeding of the 5,000) <u>Ephesians 3:20-21</u> (“By the power at work within us [God] is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine”)	<u>Matthew 19:13-15</u> (Jesus blesses the children) <u>Deuteronomy 24:17-22</u> (Care for the alien, the orphan, and the widow)	<u>John 8:2-11</u> (Jesus refuses to condemn a woman caught in adultery) <u>Matthew 23:23</u> (“You have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness.”)

Holy Week

PALM / PASSION SUNDAY	MAUNDY THURSDAY	GOOD FRIDAY	EASTER SUNDAY
The good news is... inspiring us to act	The good news is... even Judas gets his feet washed	The good news is... revealed through nonviolence	The good news is... alive in the world
<u>Mark 11:1-11</u> (Triumphal entry into Jerusalem)	<u>John 13:1-35</u> (Jesus washes the disciples' feet)	<u>Luke 22:47-53;</u> <u>Luke 23:33-38,</u> <u>44-46</u> (Judas' betrayal; Jesus heals the servant's ear after his disciples draw swords; Jesus forgives those crucifying him)	<u>Matthew 28:1-10</u> (“Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”)

Focal scriptures **Mark 6:32-44; Ephesians 3:20-21**

Theme connections

As Jesus and his disciples head to a deserted place, perhaps seeking peace and quiet, many from the surrounding towns follow them. Instead of turning them away, Jesus expresses compassion and begins an impromptu teaching session. As the day goes on, the disciples have logistics in mind and urge Jesus to send the people back into the villages so they can feed themselves. Instead, Jesus presents them with an impossible task: “You give them something to eat.” Dumbfounded, the disciples can only fathom the limitations and financial constraints of Jesus’ suggestion. Yet when they “go and see,” their meager provisions multiply so that thousands are fed. This week we focus on building networks of collective care in order to meet people’s needs. Jesus models a way to be in community by coming together and sharing what we have, dispelling perceived impossibilities. The good news empowers us to believe in the miracles that can become possible through the power of community.

Considerations for this week

In the feeding of the five thousand, we saw two key characteristics of Jesus’ ministry that we wanted to emphasize: how Jesus prioritized meeting people’s physical needs (not just spiritual needs), and his ability to mobilize a movement. Perhaps this story can teach us a lot about community organizing and communal care. Much of modern society ingrains in us the idea that we have to fend for ourselves. Tending to the needs of a whole community can seem too overwhelming a task. Certainly any pastor can empathize with the wide-eyed disciples when

Jesus tells them, “You feed them.” (How often have you felt like the task before you far outweighs the resources or time available?) Yet, Jesus has compassion for the crowd and insists that they be cared for. Compassion is the energy source for collective care. The good news is, what the disciples have to offer—five loaves and two fish—is enough. The good news is, the crowd mobilizes into action (perhaps haphazardly, without a ten-point strategic plan). The good news is, the disciples’ limiting beliefs don’t limit what God does. The good news is, everyone is fed.

Commentary:

Commentary on Mark 6:32-44; Ephesians 3:20-21

by Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail

God Doesn’t Start with the Problem

The early days of planting my church, Jubilee,⁷ and the early days of motherhood were one and the same for me. They were days when my dreams were coming true—but I wasn’t sleeping much.

My call was clear: start a new faith community. In my living room. With the expectation that we would grow to need a bigger space, soon. (Where would said bigger space be? Yeah, that was the million-dollars-we-didn’t-have question.) Every little thing felt so impossible because it was so new. I cannot tell you how many late nights I spent fretting, not just about the liturgy, but how I could make a bulletin for the first time... ever... and how we’d get it printed, and how to know how many we would need, and where I could get affordable altar linens. We were growing too fast for me to keep up—a wonder! A gift! And! It was all so depleting, this dream-come-true business.

I wonder if that’s how the disciples felt. The dreams were coming true! And, a God who makes all things new means... a lot of new. I picture their eyes popping when Jesus tells them to feed the crowd. I feel my stomach curdle on their behalf as they do the mental math for that much food. *(continued)*

Commentary on Mark 6:32-44; Ephesians 3:20-21

by Rev. Lizzie McManus-Dail *(continued)*

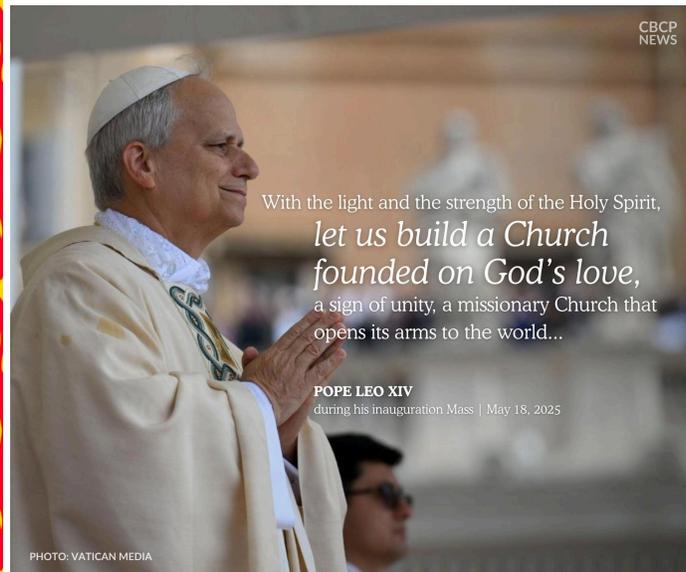
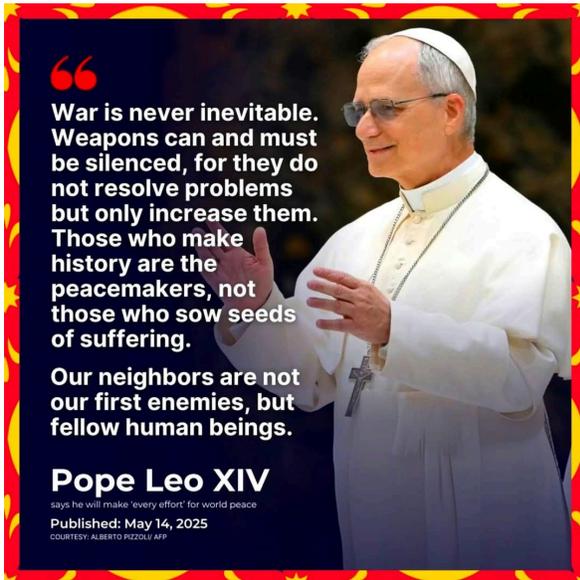
But God does not start with the problem: How do we feed all these people?¹⁸

God starts with what God has—which is everything, held in her hands. And God also starts with what God has given us—**five loaves, two fish**. With God, all things are possible because God knows that God is always... God. It’s us who break faith, it’s us who listen to scarcity, it’s us who fear our own hunger. **Our God is a God of abundance.** However loud the scarcity of the world grates, God delights in feeding the hungry, in accomplishing what we dare not imagine.

I remember one of the first abundance interruptions that salvaged my scarcity-frantic brain in those early motherhood-and-church-planter days. My in-laws were moving to town (grace upon grace) and my mother-in-law was a lifelong church pianist. Thus far, as much as I wanted music—music, after all, was what nourished me most in prayer—we had just done some simple, a cappella, Taizé songs for worship. *It would be so wonderful to have her play,* I thought. *If only I had a keyboard.*

I kid you not. The *moment* I said this half-prayer, half-hope, my neighbor posted on our local “Buy Nothing” group that he was getting rid of a keyboard and needed it gone ASAP.

God doesn’t start with the problem. God starts with what we *all* have. That Sunday, we sang “Amazing Grace” while the rafters shook. Turns out, nothing really is impossible with or for God.



Sanctified Art Guiding Q's

1. *Just before this story, the disciples have been sent out in pairs to cast out demons and heal the sick, all while carrying nothing with them and possibly facing frequent rejection (Mark 6:7-13). Then we learn that John the Baptist has been brutally beheaded (Mark 6:14-29).*
 - *Is this why Jesus invites the disciples to “come away to a deserted place”?*
 - *Are they physically and emotionally exhausted, in need of rest?*
 - *Do you think Jesus also needs respite and a place to clear his head?*
2. *The disciples' suggestion in verse 36 is not unreasonable. Some might argue it is a very reasoned and practical way for the crowds to be fed.*
 - *Do you empathize with the disciples in this story?*
 - *Can you think of a time when you considered pursuing a practical and reasoned path, but instead God called you to pursue something grander and unpredictable, perhaps something that seemed impossible?*
3. *Previously, Jesus instructed his disciples to go out in pairs, carrying “no bread, no bag, no money in their belts” (Mark 6:8). Even as Jesus sent them to heal and serve others, he prompted them to do so through a model of interdependence. Going in pairs meant they were never serving in isolation. Going without food or money meant they would be forced to rely on the generosity and hospitality of others. Perhaps Jesus was training them not just to give, but also receive.*
 - *Therefore, when the disciples suggest that the crowd be sent away to feed themselves (Mark 6:36), do you think they are struggling to choose interdependence and communal care?*
 - *Are they defaulting to an individualistic mindset and approach?*
4. *Mark's telling of this story emphasizes numbers: two hundred denarii, five loaves and two fish, groups of fifties and hundreds, twelve baskets, five thousand who eat, etc.*
 - *Why do you think the Gospel writer emphasizes the quantitative details of this miracle?*
 - *Do these details help you comprehend the scope and scale of everyone who is fed? In your ministry, when can quantitative data be helpful, and when is it limiting?*
5. *The feeding of the five thousand contains parallels to the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine. In both, a specific and finite number of vessels (water jars and baskets) are mysteriously filled with bounty. In each story, Jesus is the miracle worker, but he acts in a secretive and understated way, staying out of the spotlight.*
 - *How would you describe Jesus' leadership style?*

- *In this miracle, how do you see collective care in action?*

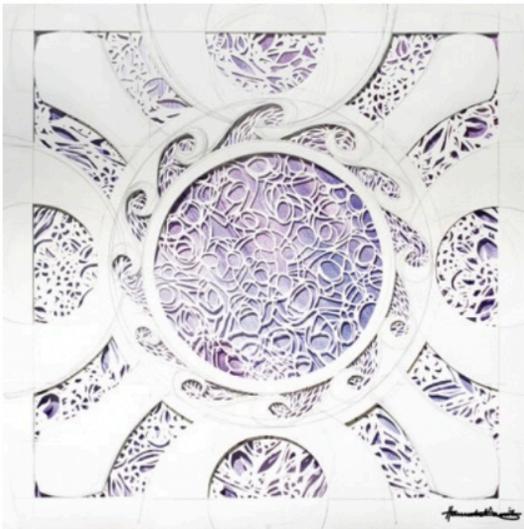
Be transformed: [Faith in Action Challenge]:

In her artist statement for Scarce Abundance, Hannah Garrity points out that, in order for everyone to be fed, communication would have been passed amongst the crowd in addition to food. She states: “In our propaganda-filled global information system, we must remember: God is not holding the mic. God is present in the still, small voice and in the smallest offerings, multiplying one by one.”¹⁹

- *Where do you see examples of God’s still, small voice moving amongst your community, perhaps multiplying “the smallest offerings” into abundance?*

Third Sunday in Lent

 the good news is... together, the impossible is possible



Scarce Abundance

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Mark 6:32-44

18”x18” Paper lace with watercolor

In this account from Mark, Jesus had compassion.¹¹ This word, *splagchnizomai* in Greek, comes from the root *splagchnon* (meaning “bowels”) which has a sense of a visceral, gut-level form of compassion. It intrigues me that this deep, embodied compassion prompted Jesus to teach.

Leading up to this moment, Jesus is trying to get away, to rest. His disciples row him toward the people; however, he is compelled by compassion to teach. As he is teaching, I imagine the crowd turning to one another—*What did he say?*—

repeating his words, passing them along.

In this artwork, the elements of the story are framed in a stained glass window design. Centered, the people gather in circles, passing the scarcely abundant food to one another. Waves encircle the crowd, representing the twelve disciples. The outer architectural elements portray the twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and fish—a representation of abundance from scarcity, powered by collective belief.

Jesus did not have a microphone. It was the people in the front who passed the still, small voice of God back to those behind them. It was the people in the front who passed more than enough food back to those who were hungry. In our propaganda-filled global information system, we must remember: God is not holding the mic. God is present in the still, small voice and in the smallest offerings, multiplying one by one. The message, the compassion, the corners of bread, and the pieces of fish all return in abundance. —Hannah Garrity

Look

In the artwork, waves represent the twelve disciples.

Why do you think the artist rendered the disciples this way?

Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:



We lift up prayers for all of God's Creation. Lord Hear our Prayers.

continued prayers for Healing and Wholeness

Rev. Alan Mark	Faith Tanaka	Kay Saxton	Patty Kobayashi
Alice Kajiya	Florence Nakakura	Kian Tehrani	Priscilla Kandel
Alvena & Tom Fukuhara	Frank Sato	Kiki Hashimoto	Raquel M. Martinez
Amy Higa	Fred Oshiro	Rev. Kim Montenegro	Rev. Mike Hiranuma
Anthony Anderson, Sr.	Geri Shiraki	Kelsey DeGracia	Ron Hamaguchi
Apolosi Lokotui	Glenn & Millie	Kenny Medeiros	Rick Katsuki
Audrey Goto	Shimizu	Kyle Ichikawa	Ruth Hirata
Austin Maeda	Grace Tochihara	Larry Takumi	Ruth Taira
Barbara Tamura	Grant Hanada	Layne Nakasone	Sandra Minjarez-Grange
Betty Kobata	Harriet Tateyama	Linda Jung	Stan Miyasato
Bill Morris	Haru Yasunaga	Liz Harner	Steph Matsunaga
Brian Okumura	Harry Manaka,	Lucas Yniguez	Sue Hamada
Cami Bruns	Sansei Rocker	Marisa Senzaki	Sue Hasegawa
Chic Miyake	Hisako Shohara	Marion Antoku	Susan DeGracia
Christine Keim	Ingrid Peterson	Mae Nakakihara	Susan Mizuki
Claretta Foster	Irene Munesato	Mary Jung	Susan Slade
Dan Segawa	Jack Honda	Mary & Bob Keily (siblings)	Takai Finau
Danny Tokudomi	Jayne Watanabe	Mary Marchand	Theresa Apicella
Dan Yamashita	Jehiel Vinluan	Mary Tamura	Tommy Sakaguchi
Deron Tokishi	Jennie Shitakuba	Maxine Butcher	Tseyli Mantooth
Diane & Destiny Ueda-Banda	Jerry Osaka	Mitchell Okumura	V'hraniku & Shaun Haynes
Dr. DoAnn Tsuneo Kaneko	Joanne Sato	Miyoko Ahn	Victoria DelaTorre
Douglas Higa	Joelle Peelgreen	Mutsuko Nishi	Walker Wilkerson
Elaine Yoshida	Jordan Sasaki	Nancy Matsushima	Wayne Shimizu
Eleanor Nagai	Joye Barker	Noah Miyagawa-Sue	Whitney Nakayama
Emi Hino	Juliet Koyanagi	Oscar Phillip Bland Jr.	Winnie Osaki
Ernie Santiago	Kaitlyn Sabedra	Pam Fink	Yukio Inouye
	Karlynn Fernandez		

those in Community Living & Homecare

Chic Miyake
Doris Kato
Emma Horiuchi
Faith Tanaka
Rev. Harry Fujimoto
Irene & Tak Ryono
Jane Kiyohara
Marion Antoku
Mary Jung
Nobie Shiokari
Ruth Hirata
Sets Asano
Sue Hasegawa

for our Worldwide Community

for the Leadership of our Country and our Churches

for the immigrants: migrants, refugees, asylees

for our siblings in Christ who struggle and in need of God's care

for those who live in through wars, unrest, and violence

for those suffering and rebuilding after national disasters and man-made catastrophes

for All Our Saints

Lynne, Gilbert, and Erica Vinluan and family on the passing of Lynne's mother, Corinne Higa, (2/14/26).

Stephanie & Darrel Inouye and family on the passing of Darrel's mother, Lorraine Inouye, (2/14/26).

Alice & Darrell Mark, on the passing of Nelson's sister, MalPina Chan (2/14/26).

Trish Ulrickson and family on the passing of Rev. Mark Ulrickson (2/25/26).

Tahoa Atu and family on the passing of Pastor Sione Salesi John Atu (2/8/26).

UPDATED 3.6.2026

Celebrations:

- ALTAR FLOWERS: Darrell, Alice, and Amanda in memory of Nelson Mark & MalPina Chan
- March Birthdays, Anniversaries, Milestones

For healing and recovery

- MADDIE SAKURAI
- DAVE DELGADO'S MOTHER RACHEL AND TWO AUNTS
- REBECCA HONG'S FATHER, REV. HONG
- Pam Fink (recovery)
- Diane Ueda-Banda

- Victoria DelaTorre
- Alvena Fukuhara & Tom
- Mae Nakakihara
- Mary Tamura
- Jennie Shitakubo
- Mitchell Okumura
- Douglas Higa (Lynne Vinluan's dad)
- Jehiel Vinluan
- Dan Yamashita
- Kenny Medeiros
- Apolosi Lokotui
- Susan Cordova (diagnosed with 3 types of cancer)
- Frank Sato
- Mary & Bob Kiely (siblings of Ann Kiely)
- Audrey Goto recovery
- Alice Kajiya
- Larry Takumi
- Harriet Tateyama
- Tseyli Mantooth
- Kim Foster & Claretta Foster: V'rhaniku Haynes: high risk pregnancy, 5 months, baby girl
- Deborah Benjamin
- Walker Wilkerson
- Kiki Hashimoto (Sue Kunisaki -friend)
- Rev's friends: Stan Miyasato, Mari'a Cleverly, (Norma, Ashley)
- Susan Slade's friend, Sherrie- finished tx
- Raquel Martinez (Julie's goddaughter)
- Mrs. Davis (friend of Kim Foster)
- Rev. Alan Mark
- The Shimizus
- Winnie Osaki
- Nancy Matsushima
- Mary Tamura
- Ruth Hirata
- Faith Tanaka
- Irene & Tak Ryono
- Nobie Shiokari
 - ...many who are homebound and those unable to be with us... and so many other that we all that we miss their presence next to us in the sanctuary and our groups

Traveling Mercies

- Minister 'Ainise & Polyana 'Isama'u as they travel to Tonga to receive a special alumnae recognition from Queen of Tonga on behalf of their beloved mother who attended Queen Salote College
- Nargis Basu - Traveling to India for 3 months - SHE'S BACK!

World Concerns:

- All who struggle, suffer, experience pain and grief...
- US government and leadership (all of them); restoration of benefits, medical, food stamps, social security...

- War-torn countries, THE MIDDLE EAST, PALESTINE, UKRAINE, SYRIA, IRAN, MEXICO, VENEZUELA around the world...Natural disasters around the world...
- Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees losing rights and protections... ●
- Health Care system
- The homeless and impoverished
- Leadership (including clergy)
- All of God's children

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord

- Lynne, Gilbert, and Erica Vinluan in the passing of Corinne (pronounced: Coreen) Higa (2/14)
- Stephanie & Darrell Inouye in the passing of Lorraine Inouye (2/14)
- Alice and Darrell Mark & Amanda Taketa-Mark on the passing of MalPina Chan (2/14)
- Service for Fred Matsuyama held on 2/27 (family & friends)
- Nichigo service for Pastor Becky's Mom, Miyoko Ahn will be held in March at West LA.
- Mary Tamura, grandmother of Kevin Tsutsui (1/31)
- Helen Nozaki (aunt of Keith Tokuhara) - Celebration of Life, March 7, 2026, 2pm
- Richard Chan (Jason's Friend, 2/18)
- Rev. Mark Ulrickson (2/25)
- The family of Pastor Sione John Atu

And Know that He is God: Closing Prayer & Blessing

As you leave this place,
 when you meet anger, speak with love.
 When you meet fear, speak with hope.
 When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.
 But no matter what, speak this good news.
 For the good news of the gospel is
 love and justice for all.
 It is joy that surprises,
 and nonviolence that transforms.
 The good news of the gospel is alive in the world,
 so go forth speaking.
 For if you won't, then who will?
 Thanks be to God
 for this good, good news.
 Amen.

Further reading & research

Watch "Radical Neighbouring—The Farm Where Nothing is for Sale." Posted on YouTube by "Campfire Stories." June 1, 2025. [youtube.com/watch?v=dynQV-oKM0E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dynQV-oKM0E)

(Note: This award winning short documentary follows a farmer, Adam Wilson, who was given \$500k to purchase a farm and use it to feed his neighbors for free. The film explores radical neighbouring, non-commercial food systems, and how generosity and shared resources can reshape the way communities live together. Around 13 minutes into the video, Adam Wilson describes the regular community meals they call "Gratitude Feasts." He states: "So we still serve the food family-style, and find that simply changing our relationship to the food awakens a capacity

for village-mindedness, a capacity to imagine the whole before we serve ourselves. And it's quite remarkable to see that. That that's in us, waiting to be reawakened. And it's not a hardship for people to share with one another. It's actually quite joyful and meaningful and perhaps a whole lot less lonely.")

Read "Portland coffee shop raises more than \$184K for free breakfast for SNAP recipients," by Mason Leib and Faith Bernstein. ABC News. October 29, 2025.
abcnews.go.com/GMA/Living/portland-coffee-shop-raises-184k-free-breakfast-snap/story?id=126951978

(Note: This article features Heretic Coffee Co. in Portland, Oregon, and how, in the face of cuts to government-funded food subsidies, they raised over \$184k to help feed their community. In the feature, the cafe owner Josh White describes their decision: "It was a very simple thing. We have food. And we can give away that food to people who are hungry." When told that their generosity could cause the cafe to go bankrupt, White responded: "That's fine. If we literally have to shut our doors, if we go broke making sure children have food for breakfast, I'm really OK if that's the reason why we lose our business." While this story highlights US-based events in 2025, we hope the ripple effect of generosity and determination evident in this story can be endlessly inspiring to anyone in any time and place.)

Read "The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity" by Walter Brueggemann. Religion Online. March 24-31, 1999. religion-online.org/article/the-liturgy-of-abundance-the-myth-of-scarcity/
(Note: This article, originally published in the Christian Century in 1999, traces theologian Walter Brueggemann's theory that the Bible provides a throughline of abundance. He writes: "The feeding of the multitudes, recorded in Mark's Gospel, is an example of the new world coming into being through God. . . . [Jesus] demonstrated that the world is filled with abundance and freighted with generosity. If bread is broken and shared, there is enough for all. Jesus is engaged in the sacramental, subversive reordering of public reality. . . . Our world absolutely requires this news. It has nothing to do with being Republicans or Democrats, liberals or conservatives, socialists or capitalists. It is much more elemental: the creation is infused with the Creator's generosity, and we can find practices, procedures and institutions that allow that generosity to work. Like the rich young man in Mark 10, we all have many possessions. Sharing our abundance may, as Jesus says, be impossible for mortals, but nothing is impossible for God.")



Far More Abundantly

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Ephesians 3:20-21

11"x14" Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on paper, with gold leaf detail

I read this Ephesians text alongside the feeding of the five thousand. I placed Jesus at the center of the image,¹² but he did not feed the crowds alone. He asked his disciples to offer what they had. They responded with meager resources, yet those small gifts were enough.

Through the lens of Ephesians, if Jesus were to ask us today what we have to give, our answer would be:

We have the power you have given us to do the impossible. The same power that turned five loaves and two fish into a feast for thousands—with leftovers—empowers us “to accomplish far more abundantly than all we can ask or imagine.”

Do we allow this truth to settle into our bones and animate our actions?

I'll admit, I tried to avoid this passage because it felt overly optimistic in light of today's world. People still go hungry. Wars rage. The earth groans under our misuse. Yet if we reimagine the systems we created, studies show it is possible for every human being to have what they need.¹³ That would require massive restructuring, international cooperation, and the reallocation of resources—but not more than we already possess. We don't need a miracle of multiplication. We simply need to use what we've been given.

In a world convinced of scarcity, this is astonishingly good news. We already have enough. And as my mentor used to say, “Enough is abundance.” What will we do with this abundance? Is it too lofty to dream of a world that sustains all of life? Perhaps. Yet I believe it is God's own desire that all may have life, and have it abundantly.¹⁴ This is the work before us, accomplished through the power at work within us, through Jesus Christ. Amen. —Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Look

Consider the archway and what it could symbolize. Do you see a table, a tablet, a boat, a door, a tomb—or all of these things or something else?

¹² In the center of the image, Jesus raises his arms and breaks bread. Above Jesus' hands is a mustard seed. Surrounding the baskets are thin line carvings of mustard flowers. Like the seed, we may be small, but we hold so much potential inside of us. Surrounding the archway are twelve baskets of seven loaves or fish which take on the shape of flowers. The number twelve represents community, and seven represents wholeness. When everyone has what they need, the community is whole.

¹³ globalcommonsalliance.org/news/new-research-reveals-path-to-prosperity-for-planet-and-people-if-earths-critical-resources-are-better-shared/

¹⁴ John 10:9-11