

**Took Blessed Broke Gave**  
**Mark 6:30-44**

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Where in the world is the table? That's the question for this morning. As we have been pursuing our "table talk" this summer we've asked all kinds of questions about the table – what, who, how, when? But today the question is *where*.

Some of the most remarkable Gospel stories portray Jesus feeding of the multitudes. The scene is familiar: The crowds have gathered, they have no food and Jesus insists that they be fed. Amazingly a little is multiplied into everything that is needed with left-overs to spare. In God's realm there is always enough.

We also know that these feeding of the multitudes stories are prototypes of the Lord's Table. In fact, the ritual words of taking bread, breaking it, giving thanks and giving are prominently included. This is no accident, of course. This is the Lord's Table for the multitudes.

But where is this table? When I read all the stories surrounding this story in Mark's Gospel what did I find? What I found was this: sick people, demon-possession, forces of chaos only Jesus could tame, conflict with religious people, governmental persecution and executions, Jesus rejected by his own hometown people.

The message became clear. The table is located in the middle of the mess and always has been. The table is not set with candles and linen among quiet harmonious circumstances but rather surrounded by chaos and even threat.

It reminds me of the images of Bedouin hospitality found in Psalm 23: You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. In this Psalm we find that the table is provided by the host who has given sanctuary. I sit at table and receive protection, anointing, and the cup of salvation.

This is not a table surrounded by tranquility, but rather by threat and challenge.

It is a table like the one shared by Jesus and his disciples in his last supper with them. They sit at table, break the bread, share the cup, speak of remembrance will be needed, and prepare to go out to face the inevitable. Where is this table? It prepared in the presence of my enemies.

The table of the feeding of the multitudes is located in the same place – not among ease and free from conflict or suffering, but in the middle of it. The thousands who gathered knew deprivation, fear, hopelessness and adversity, which is exactly why the feeding meant what it did. The table shared in the presence of enemies - whatever those enemies happen to be - is always the most important one.

The film *Of Gods and Men* is based on true events, the story of French Trappist monks living in Algeria during a time of civil war. The violence is escalating and threat to the monks is increasing day by day. Their small community continues to discuss whether they should stay or leave. And eventually they all decide to remain to serve where they always have.

In a powerful scene near the end of the film they all gather for what would be their final meal together. They play classical music. They share wine. They pray and banter and joke. And then they become somber and quietly go back to their quarters. And then they were all taken by rebels never to be seen again.

Their table was set in the wilderness, a table in the presence of their enemies, the last supper before the inevitable, an island of peace surrounded by swirling waters.

Today we share the table in similar spaces. Where is the table? The table is located where life is hard and life is beautiful. The table is located where we feel blessed and bereft. The table is always located where we are famished for the things of God.

If we ask ourselves what is at the heart of this feeding story, what is the engine that makes it so, the answer is not hard to find.

The story tells us that when Jesus arrived and saw the huge crowd he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. This is the snapshot of the bountiful love of God. Christ looks upon them and loves them as they are. There were no admission tickets to his dinner, no filter for who is in and who is out. His compassion is poured over their lostness. And this is our answer.

We know where the table is; it sits squarely in the center of all of the suffering, loss and dangers of this world. It sits in the middle of our joy, happiness and successes. It is there, a table in the presence of my enemies. It is the table among friends. But above all it is the table where the compassion of Christ draws in everyone who knows their need and takes the body of Christ into their own body.

To know that the compassion of Christ falls upon us makes all the difference in the world. Regardless of where we are and where the table is, God's love falls down deep and wide.

And then in the face of so much seemingly impossible need Jesus says to his disciples, "You feed them." I have compassion, now *you* have compassion. And how? Trust that out of a little much will grow, in fact everything you need.

When Christ is present everything becomes possible.

The table of God in the world is placed in turbulent locales, the turbulence in our lives and around our lives. But that is exactly the place where we are anointed with oil and our cup overflows, where for a shining moment eternity breaks through, where we know Christ has compassion upon us and then we have the ability to have compassion for others.

Big feeding takes place wherever he takes, breaks, blesses and gives. And it is always enough and more.

Thanks be to God.