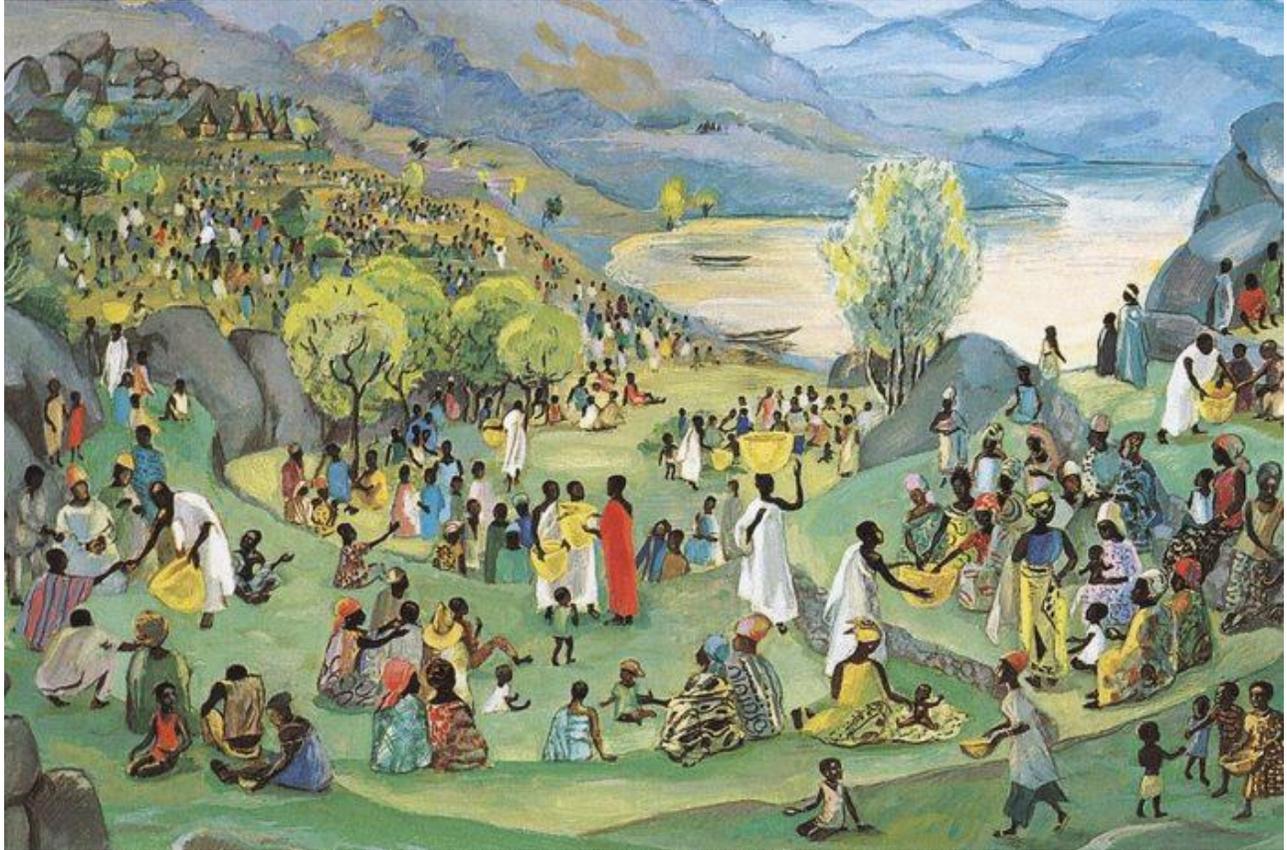


**Lakewood Congregational Church
Breathing In Abundance**

August 2, 2020



13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 15When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' 16Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' 17They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' 18And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' 19Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 14:13-21



♥ Today's passage is a beloved miracle. I love the image of a community sharing five loaves and two fishes. They are sharing, but they are eating until everyone is full and there remains twelve baskets of leftovers. Abundance in community. Abundance in faith. Abundance overflows for each and every person.

I am hearing, seeing, and feeling what I have previously experienced with this passage, as if the ideas and emotions present themselves on autopilot. This year, today's verses have also

left me struggling for perspective and balance. In the United Church of Christ, we often say that God is still speaking and I know that to be true.

Now when Jesus heard this is the beginning of our scripture passage. What did Jesus hear while traveling the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee? He heard from the disciples that they had buried his friend, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and the person who baptized Jesus. Jesus heard that the imprisoned John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. He heard that John's head was presented on a platter to Salome. Jesus heard that his childhood friend and colleague in ministry was murdered.

How would you respond in this situation? How do you respond when anger, disbelief, and grief implode every emotion, make every bone ache, and each heartbeat roars in your ears? Jesus responded with compassion, healing, and the miracle of loaves and fishes multiplying to feed a vast crowd.

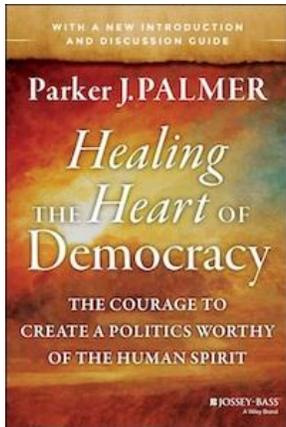
When your worldview is one of scarcity, one where resources are limited, faith is only for the chosen few, and where there is never enough, then you behave by hoarding, think of faith as a prop if you think of faith at all, and you trust very few people. People with a scarcity mindset tend to respond like Herod and his family. They respond with violence and with hospitality that includes a head on a platter because fear and loss are the motivators.

When your worldview is one of abundance, one where resources are available, faith is for all who believe, and where all are welcome, then you behave by balancing your needs with the needs of others, faith is usually foundational, and you trust and share more willingly. People with an abundance mindset or who strive for that mindset tend to respond like Jesus. They respond with nonviolence and with extravagant hospitality because love and wholeness are the motivators.

A grieving and tired Jesus held five loaves and two fishes, looked to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves and asked his disciples to serve the meal. God's answer when Jesus looked to heaven was inclusive nonviolent hospitality that exceeded human expectations and human understanding. Abundance was and remains God's answer.

- When have you responded with a worldview of scarcity?
- When have you responded with a worldview of abundance?

- Most of the time we balance the push and pull of scarcity and abundance worldviews. How do you know when you are being pushed or pulled? How do you balance your decisions?



♥ Today is our sixth week exploring Parker J. Palmer’s book, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*. If you missed the previous weeks, you may find the information on LCC’s website under the blog tab, in the weekly reflections. Please purchase this book or borrow it from the library. This week, we are learning about the *Fifth Habit of the Heart: A Capacity to Create Community*.

First Habit of the Heart: We’re All in this Together
Second Habit of the Heart: An Appreciation of Otherness
Third Habit of the Heart: A Capacity to Hold Tension Creatively
Fourth Habit of the Heart: A Sense of Voice and Agency
Fifth Habit of the Heart: A Capacity to Create Community

Videos

The Fifth Habit of the Heart: A Capacity to Create Community (1:00 minutes)

<http://www.couragerenewal.org/democracyguide/v17/>

- Throughout your life, which communities have helped you grow and develop your voice?
- Community can be two or more gathered. Who comprises your current community? If you do not have a community, please contact Pastor Joanna or me. We would enjoy helping you discover two or more special people.
- How did Jesus form community? Which of Jesus’ ways to form community best fit your personality or the ways you like to move in this world?

Embracing Diversity (3:00 minutes)

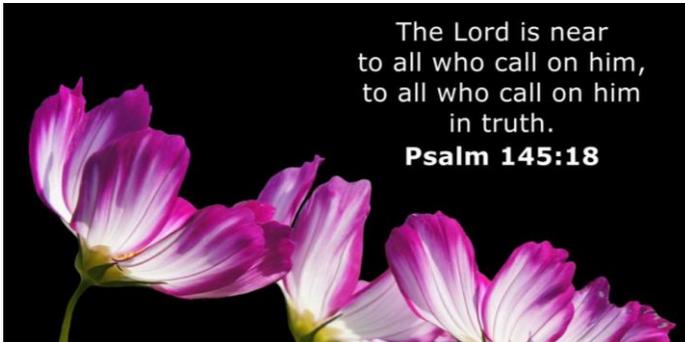
<http://www.couragerenewal.org/democracyguide/v27/>

- What is your personal relationship with American democracy?
- Think of places, like the grocery store, where you mingle with the company of strangers. Where do or can you meet people different from you?
- How has the pandemic influenced your perception of “others” or people outside your immediate circle of contacts? Do you consider changes in your perceptions short-term or longer-term?

Never Doubt the Power of Love: “One Woman and a Shovel” with Parker Palmer and Carrie Newcomer (9:25 minutes). Newcomer references her song, “*Betty’s Diner*.” That link is provided in our July 12 reflection or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-MWQ-hBoAc>

- When has your involvement in a community impacted change?
- Do you believe in the “power of one” to influence families and communities?

- Reflect on two or three different ways that Jesus impacted community. Do any of these ways guide you as you impact change in your home, at work, at church, or in the larger community?



♥ Verses from Psalm 145 are a part of the Revised Common Lectionary reading today. The lectionary is a three-year cycle that offers scripture to pair with the liturgical calendar. Each week, there are usually an Old Testament, Psalm, Gospel, and New Testament passage that relate to each other. The three-year cycle is a way for congregations and pastors to read and study the Bible.

- Read the Psalm passages slowly, verse by verse. What is the psalmist saying about God? What is the psalmist's commitment to God?
- With this Psalm, verse by verse, reflect on how Jesus acted in today's miracle. How is Jesus his Father's son?
- How can the psalmist and Jesus guide your faith journey?

Psalm 145: 8-9, 14-21

⁸ *The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

⁹ *The LORD is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made.*

¹⁴ *The LORD upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.*

¹⁵ *The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.*

¹⁶ *You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.*

¹⁷ *The LORD is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.*

¹⁸ *The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.*

¹⁹ *He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.*

²⁰ *The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.*

²¹ *My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and all flesh will bless his holy name for ever and ever.*



Most of us are unable to travel to The Chautauqua Institute in New York this summer due to the COVID-19 interstate requirements. *Break Now the Bread of Life* is a hymn from the Institute. Written by Mary Lathbury, the 1877 Poet Laureate of Chautauqua, with music by the chorus director, William F. Sherwin. It is in the Chalice hymnal (#321) and this hymn remains an Institute favorite. Tune:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCdrzJJrZS0>

Break Now the Bread of Life

*Break now the bread of life, Savior, to me, as you once broke the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek you, Lord; my spirit yearns for you, O Living Word.*

*Bless now the truth, dear Christ, to me, to me, as you once blessed the bread by Galilee;
Then shall all bondage cease, all shackles fall, and I shall find my peace, my all in all.*

References and Images

Jesus Multiplies the loaves and fishes, 1973. Artist: Jesus Mafa Project, Cameroon

Rev. François Vidil, a Roman Catholic missionary, created the Jesus Mafa Project. He encouraged the expression of Bible stories that would connect worshipfully to the communities he served in Northern Cameroon. The artwork is unsigned because individual artists chose to present their art as a communal offering to God, to each other and, now, to us.

JESUS MAFA. Jesus multiplies the loaves and fish, from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48287> [retrieved July 28, 2020]. Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr> (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>).

Sea of Galilee at Tabgha: https://live.staticflickr.com/7899/46115594765_73a8ea0012_b.jpg

Parker J. Palmer: couragerenewal.org

Cosmos, Psalm 145: <https://dailyverses.net/images/en/niv/xl/psalms-145-18-2.jpg>

Early Christian mosaic in front of the altar. The Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes in Tabgha, Israel, late 5th – early 6th century AD.

<https://www.baslibrary.org/sites/default/files/bsba100302200l.jpg>