

## Lent Devotional March 24, 2020

### Scripture

Mark 8:1-10

*1 In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, 2 "I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. 3 If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance." 4 His disciples replied, "How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?" 5 He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." 6 Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. 7 They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. 8 They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. 9 Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. 10 And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.*

### Devotional

#### **The Rev. Dr. Robert J. Weingartner '82, Mission (2012)**

The familiar story of Jesus' feeding the 4000, related in today's Gospel reading, has troubled scholars a bit. Some see such close parallels with the feeding of the 5000 that they conclude it is the same event. But in Mark 8:19 Jesus himself refers to the two feedings, and Mark 6:30-44 has already recorded the feeding of the 5000.

In today's reading from Mark 8, Jesus is in the region of the Decapolis, on the eastern shore of Galilee—an area populated by Jews and Gentiles. It appears that Jesus is there for an intensive time of teaching, and what seems to occur in this remarkable fellowship meal is that both Jew and Gentile sit together. Jesus has entered pagan territory to give a glimpse of his concern for all peoples and the global scale of the commission he will give his disciples.

Jesus observes the great need of the crowd and asks the disciples what could be done. His disciples reply, "How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?" Do the disciples lack confidence in Jesus' ability to perform another miracle? I don't think so. Are they just being cautious, not wanting to appear to be directing Jesus in a course of action? Perhaps. Or maybe they are still trying to figure out who this Jesus is and what it means for him to be at work in the world and their lives. Mark tells us after the first feeding that they "did not understand about the loaves" (6:52).

There is much that I don't understand about what it means for Jesus to be at work in my life. Why does God seem to act in some moments but not in others? What is the connection between our prayer and God's action? We can gain insight into those questions as we live with the stories of Jesus told in the Gospels. I see myself in those stories, with the crowds that have begun to gather around Jesus—those who come to him with broken hopes and broken hearts and broken bodies. I have discovered that I, too, am hungry for things that one can find only in Jesus.

### Prayer

Lord, as we follow Jesus and commit ourselves afresh to living for him in the world, we pray not only for ourselves and others who trust in Jesus—we ask that you will also hear our prayers in behalf of people who do not yet know him. May we share and show God's love to all whom you bring our way. Amen.