

LIFE IN THE VINE

Welcome

June 13, 2021

Overarching Theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

Mark:

The Gospel according to Mark is written by John Mark, who was not one of the apostles but had accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Ac. 13:13). The purpose of the writing of this Gospel was to present the person, work, and teachings of Jesus and it was written to the Christians in Rome, the place of the writing of this Gospel, probably between AD 55 and 65. A key verse of this Gospel is: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (10:45). Some of the special features of this Gospel are: Mark was probably the first Gospel to be written and one of the reasons to say this is because the other Gospels quote all but 31 verses of Mark; Mark records more miracles than the other Gospels and by this we see that this Gospel focuses more on what Jesus did that revealed his true identity, rather than on what he said.

– Adapted from The Life Application Bible, p. 1722.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Mark 6:30-44 NRSV

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and

rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴ As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; ³⁶ send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.” ³⁷ But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸ And he said to them, “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” When they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹ Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And all ate and were filled; ⁴³ and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

This Week:

From this Sunday we begin a new Sermon Series for the next 6 Sundays called ‘Life in the Vine.’ This series is based on the theme for the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity based on the words of Jesus found in John 15:1-17 where Jesus refers to himself as the Vine and his disciples as the branches meant to bear fruit to bring glory to the Father. Jesus gave the picture of the Vine to describe his life with his disciples and their lives in relation to each other. Today, on the first Sunday in this Series we look at Jesus welcoming his disciples who believe in him and love him to share in relationship with him, to be spiritually connected to him, to abide in him, like the branches in the vine so as to receive the ‘sap of abundant and eternal life’ and also to share in his Kingdom work of love and compassion to welcome in true friendship others too who believe and love him into this beautiful relationship of life in the vine. Jesus said, “You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last...” (Jn 15:16).

The miracle of Jesus Feeding the Five Thousand is the only miracle to be recorded in all the four Gospel accounts and this tells us that the Gospel-writers and the people to whom they first wrote, the early Christian communities and those seeking to know more about Jesus, placed great importance on this miracle. This miracle showed them and it shows us as disciples of Christ today Jesus’ great

heart of love, compassion, and care for all people and for the whole person; the meal of love hosted by Jesus for all those who believe in him; the abundance of spiritual blessing received by all those who are in relationship with Jesus. But along with all these, this incident tells us of how Jesus called and welcomed the chosen Twelve disciples, termed 'apostles,' meaning 'sent ones,' into relationship with him to be transformed and into sharing in preaching and teaching about the Kingdom of God to others, even to find time away together for rest and renewal. But the crowds that were following Jesus found them in the place where they intended to be away and the reaction of Jesus to them was of compassion as they were longing for love and care. Jesus ministered to them by teaching them about God's love and the Kingdom of God and went on to do so late into the day. The disciples' reaction probably was that of finding the crowds to have interrupted their time of being alone and of rest and a burden on them for they would be hungry and so they wanted Jesus to send the crowds away so that they would find their own food. But Jesus answered them by asking them to provide food for the crowds and this astonished the disciples as they knew that they had very little resources for the great need before them. Jesus asked them to use whatever they had, five loaves and two fishes, and he multiplied it to feed the crowd of people in abundance and more as there were twelve baskets full of leftover that was gathered.

Jesus welcomed the crowds of people who were seeking him and believed in him and he wanted his disciples too to do the same. Therefore, he did not wish to do the miracle without his disciples, without them sharing whatever resources they had so as to show love and compassion to others. Even today Jesus calls and welcomes us as his disciples into being transformed with his love and also calls us to share his love with others in need and to welcome others who seek him and believe in him, all other Christians.

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. When and in what ways have you experienced Jesus' call and welcome in your life into intimate relationship with him so that you may find transformation?
2. Have there been times in your life when you were challenged to respond to interruptions to your plans in the way that Jesus did and not in the way the disciples did?
3. How do you react when you are given an impossible task for which you know you have little or no resources to fulfill? At such times do you factor in God to make things possible through prayer?

4. What small ways can you offer for God to use so as to share God's love with others in need and welcome other Christians in true friendship?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Mark 6:37a NRSV
³⁷ But he answered them, "You give them something to eat."
3. Prayerfully approach God in asking to be able to experience Jesus' call and welcome to be transformed more within so as to be willing and able to offer whatever little resources or poor abilities to share his love and welcome to others in need and all other Christians.