

Sunday, November 26, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
“After Giving Thanks: Our Hymn of Grateful Praise”
John 6:5-23

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, ask participants, “What is your favorite liturgical (church-related) day/holiday of the year?”

Read John 6:5-23

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the text?

Read John 6:5-23 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

This is the famous story of the feeding of the five thousand. Since women and children were not counted in Jesus' time, there may have been more than ten thousand people present. What does the scripture say the boy had to offer before Jesus blessed the food?

- I attended the World Council of Churches' stewardship program (Christian leadership) some years ago and spent three weeks with other young adults from all over the world. One night, we were so hungry that we decided to bring whatever we had from each room. I brought my rice cookies (senbei), and others brought many different kinds of food to the round table. Some of the food I had never seen in my life. After we blessed the food and thanked God for the food and friends, each of us explained what food we had brought to share. It was one of the moments I was fed spiritually, emotionally, and physically. I wondered if people felt that way when Jesus fed the five thousand.
- Have you had an experience in which you did not think there was enough, but plenty was available? If you have, where did you see God in the situation?

As Jesus was walking on the sea, he said, “It is I; do not be afraid” (John 6:20) because his disciples were so terrified. In the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, “Do not be afraid” appears eighty times, and “fear not” appears 169 times. God is telling us not to be afraid.

- In what area of your life/ministry do you not want to be afraid?

“The people were hanging out in the place where it happened. The miracle place. But John doesn't call it a miracle place. He says that **it is the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks**. Think about it. That's what John wants us to remember: that this meal, **this miracle, happened after gratitude was expressed**. Gratitude for the

abundance that didn't look like abundance. Gratitude for the satisfaction that came out of hunger. Gratitude becomes a way of seeing and a way of being in the world. We give thanks to God for what is about to happen. We give thanks for what we might not yet see, but what we trust God will provide.”

- For what do you want to give thanks to God?
- Do you need to work on giving thanks more?

This is the last Sunday of the liturgical year (church calendar). The first day of Advent (next Sunday) is the beginning of the next liturgical year. Reflect on this liturgical year (from November 27, 2022, until today).

- Have you grown closer to Jesus?
- What did you do so that you could be closer to Jesus? (attended worship more often, helped with church ministries, prayed, meditated, read the Bible, participated/led small-group/Bible study, etc.)
- Are there things you want to do as you prepare for the next liturgical year to become a more mature disciple?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Gracious and loving God, thank you for feeding us spiritually, physically, and emotionally. As was the case in today's scripture, sometimes we question how you can feed the hungry or walk on water. Forgive us, we pray. Help us to trust you and give thanks to you. On this last Sunday of the liturgical year, continue to use us as instruments of peace in the year to come. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.