

GROUPS (AND WHY YOU DON'T LIKE THIS TITLE)

Mark 6:30-34

#21 in our series "Jesus Stories"

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Prayer

Lord God, we thank you that your love never fails, that you don't change, that you in fact are Love. And sometimes Father, you know that we think you hate us. We think you've forgotten about us. And yet, Lord, you have revealed in Jesus Christ the Lord that your love never changes, that you are always Love, even when we do our absolute worst to you, nailing you to our tree of knowledge, you suffer and die and transform it into the tree of life, giving us your body and your blood to drink because you are love and you don't change, and Love never fails. Help us to preach now Father, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Mark 6:30-34

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted (desolate) place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd.

Jesus is a rock star in Mark 6. He tries to get away, in a boat with his small group, and the crowd chases him along the shore intercepting him. The crowd (the *oklos*), is a large gathering of people poorly connected. In Scripture, the crowd is extremely fickle, chanting, "Hosanna" one moment and "Crucify" the next. A person can feel incredibly lonely in a crowd.

Well, the crowd is looking for Jesus. I suppose we're all looking for Jesus and we assume He's a rock star. So, looking for Jesus, we naturally look for and listen to people like Billy Graham and Joel Olsteen, people that fill up football stadiums (and I'm convinced that Jesus is in Billy Graham and Joel Olsteen, so I'm not criticizing them at all.) I'm just saying we assume that Jesus is a rock star, but it's impossible to know a rock star. It's impossible to know a rock star because a rock star is an idol of our own creation.

You can't know an idol because an idol is not real. Well, to the crowd, Jesus was a rock star, and the crowd was looking for Jesus. I've spent a lot of time looking for Jesus. When I was younger, I figured that I'd find him in guys like Tim Brewer. Tim Brewer was the older, cool guy who'd come speak at our youth group. Then I looked for him in Don Moomaw, senior pastor of Bel Air Presbyterian Church, pastor of President Reagan, All American football star and my boss. I was the high school youth director, and he was a rock star. Then I thought I found Jesus in Ron Lee Davis, Senior Pastor, author, speaker, and my boss in Northern California. Ron was a rock star. Tony Campolo, Chuck Swindoll, Brennan Manning, Philip Yancey, they

were my spiritual superstars. Each of them drew a huge crowd, and I learned a ton of great stuff *about* Jesus from each of them. It's kind of unusual, but I've gotten to meet and even know each of my rock stars . . . but that's different than meeting and knowing Jesus. Well, the crowd is looking for Jesus. They've turned him into a rock star.

Mark 6: 34-36

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them

Isn't that something? It doesn't say that He's impressed with the crowd, but He has compassion for the crowd.

because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat."

They know about Jesus, but they're still hungry.
They're like *"sheep without a shepherd."*

A shepherd's job is to feed hungry sheep. Prophets, like Ezekiel, prophesied a coming shepherd, the Messiah. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would serve a great banquet on a mountain for all people and swallow up death forever (Isaiah 25:6-9). Expectations were incredibly high. And so, the crowd sat on this mountain at the edge of the sea desperately hungry and looking at Jesus. The disciples say:

Mark 6: 36-37

Send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat. 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?"

They said to him, "Oh sure, Jesus, no problem. We'll just whip out forty thousand dollars worth of bread and give it to the crowd." They said to him, "Oh, sure, Jesus. Right. We can do that." "This is insane." I can't tell you the number of times I've sat in my office trying to write a sermon and saying, "Jesus, this is just, insane!" "How can I feed your sheep?" Not only tell them *about* you but feed them *with* you!

You know, sheep don't apply food to their lives. They eat food and it becomes their lives. *"And man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."* We're supposed to eat the Word of God.

Well, the disciples are wondering, "How do you expect us to feed all these sheep?" I know my spiritual rock stars struggled with that question. Several years ago, Tim Brewer asphyxiated himself in his garage, leaving behind a young family, a confused church and a note in which he wrote: *"It is my own wretched weakness of which I'm most ashamed . . . forgive me for being such an unfaithful shepherd."*

Don Moomaw and Ron Davis are great guys from whom I learned a great deal about Jesus, but both were caught in multiple affairs, and a world of lies, when I was on their staff. Ron told me, “Peter, the pressure was so great I just started carving out time for myself.” And it grew and it grew. What pressure is he talking about? The pressure of having to feed all those sheep, and then the pressure of being known, yet totally unknown, the pressure of being a rock star.

Brennan Manning died recently. I learned so much from Brennan Manning, but Brennan struggled with some raging addictions. I suspect it haunted him. “How do I feed the sheep?” Tony Campolo and Philip Yancey both taught me incredible things about Jesus. But both are just guys. Tony Campolo’s kind of a grumpy, old Italian. And when I’d go skiing with Philip, I’d expect to receive all these pearls of wisdom and mostly, he wanted to talk about lunch.

Sometimes, people will go out to lunch with me because they were impressed with a sermon. And then, I’ll suspect they’re disappointed in me, because they want something from me and I can’t give it to them – at least not all of them. And so I despair, thinking, “How can I give all of them something to eat?”

I love this cartoon. [Image of the cartoon]

In the middle, there’s the pastor up in the pulpit preaching. The bubble above his head says, “Blah, blah, blah . . .” There’s the crowd. Each person has a thought bubble, “Dear God, I’m lonely,” “Oh, God! Can’t you see how lonely I am.” “Oh God! I’m so lonely! I’m lonely!”

Jesus looks at the crowd, then looks at his disciples and says, “*You give them something to eat.*”

Well, how are the disciples supposed to feed that crowd? And how are you supposed to feed the people that God has placed in your life?

Mark 6: 37-38

The disciples say,

“Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii (a denari is a day’s wage) worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?” And he said to them, “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” When they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”

Four years ago, we preached on this story as it’s recorded in the gospel of John, and I made a couple of points:

1. All we have is enough. Already we have all we need for the banquet, so give all you have and Jesus makes the banquet.
2. When you have nothing, give the nothing, and with that Jesus makes the Great Banquet.

John points out that the loaves came from a little boy they found in the crowd, and that the loaves were barley loaves. Everyone knew, in that day, that was the food of abject poverty—the food the poor ate. And the fish would’ve been the size of sardines.

Mark 6: 38-39

And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass.

Psalm 23 *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green grass."*

Psalm 23 follows Psalm 22, which describes the crucifixion of Christ, which is our Passover. John points out that this was the time of the Passover.

Verse 39 - 44

Then Jesus ordered the disciples,

To get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass.

Literally: "He ordered them to recline all groups by groups on the green grass."

So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. 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. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Five thousand is *pentakischilioi* in Greek.

Five is *pente*.

Fifty is *pentekonta*.

Fiftieth is *pentekoste*.

And Pentecost is the fiftieth day after Passover. It's the Sabbath of the Sabbaths, seven times seven, forty-nine, and in Jewish reasoning that's the fiftieth day. It's the Sabbath of the Sabbaths when all is at rest, for all are satisfied. You see, Jesus is showing them how Passover turns into Pentecost.

So how does a slaughtered lamb turn into a party where everyone is so intoxicated with the Spirit, they appear to be drunk?

How will the great banquet be served?

How will the Great Shepherd feed his sheep?

How will the apostles give them all something to eat?

1. They give what they have.
2. Jesus says stuff and does stuff – to their stuff.
3. The disciples give that stuff to groups, for Jesus told them to form groups.

The answer somehow is Groups. Groups!! Isn't that thrilling? (Peter waves his arms around) Form Groups, is the answer.

What do you think of when you think of joining a group?

Clip from *Austin Powers International Man of Mystery*

[A group of people are in a therapist's office, in the middle of a group therapy session, consisting of six or seven fathers with their teenage sons. It is emotionally charged. The room is filled with a lot of pained expressions and coffee in Styrofoam cups.]

Therapist: Give in to the beauty of your feelings, and say the words. Come on.

Son 1: (Crying) I love you, Dad.

Dad 1: (Crying) I love you too, Son.

[They hug. Everyone applauds. We see Dr. Evil and Scott.]

Therapist: That was great, Mr. Keon, Dave. Thank you. Ok, group, we have two new members. Say hello to Scott and his father, Mr . . . Ehhville?

Dr. Evil: Evil, actually, Doctor Evil.

Group: Hello, Dr. Evil. Hello Scott.

Scott Evil: Hello everybody.

Therapist: So, Scott, why don't we start with you? What brings you here with us today?

Scott Evil: Well, I just really met my dad for the first time five days ago.

Dr. Evil: I was partially frozen his whole life.

Therapist: That is beautiful, that you could admit to that.

Scott Evil: He comes back and now he wants me to take over the family business.

Dr. Evil: But, Scott, who's going to take over the world when I die?

Therapist: Listen to the words he uses, "Who's going to take over the world when I die. Feels like that to some of us sometimes, doesn't it?

Group: Um hmm, yeah. (Nods of agreement are expressed.)

Therapist: We've heard from you Scott, now uh, you (The groups turns to Dr. Evil) tell us a little bit about yourself.

Dr. Evil: The details of my life are quite inconsequential.

Therapist: Oh, no, please, please, let's hear about your childhood.

Group: Yes of course! Go ahead... Come on.

Dr. Evil: Very well, where do I begin? My father was a relentlessly self-improving boulangerie owner from Belgium with low-grade narcolepsy and a penchant for buggery. My mother was a fifteen-year-old French prostitute named Chloe with webbed feet. My father would womanize, he would drink, and he would make outrageous claims like: he invented the question mark. Sometimes he would accuse chestnuts of being lazy (the sort of general malaise that only the genius possess and the insane lament).

Therapist: You know, we have to stop.

That's what I think of when I think of groups and I'm the one running the group. By the end, I think, "That's enough."

They formed groups on the hillside and how do you suppose they formed these groups? Do you suppose that they formed them around one particular problem or issue, like therapy groups for people with "daddy issues?" Do you think they formed affinity groups: "All the fishermen meet over here...All the tax collectors meet over there?" Do you think they did it by spiritual rank or maturity?

When I went on the Campus Life Crusade retreats, we got assigned to a certain group and received a particular color of notebook to correspond to our spiritual maturity. My friend Dave and I stole advanced notebooks, so we could go to the group for the spiritually mature. Do you think they had tryouts? Do you think they picked teams like in Junior High?

My guess is that they just sat down next to the people they happened to be standing by: old, young, fat, thin, it didn't matter. Fishermen, tax collectors, prostitutes, and Pharisees, it didn't matter. Some of them were probably pagan Greeks or Romans, some Samaritans. Undoubtedly, there were a lot of Jews and none of them were Christians—at least not yet. It didn't matter.

And that is truly remarkable, for who you ate with, in that society, was literally everything! (The situation was worse than the cafeteria at your junior high.) To dine with someone was to accept that someone into the sanctuary of communion with yourself. When you dined with somebody, it was like forming a new covenant. That's why the Pharisees got so bent out of shape that Jesus would eat with "tax collectors and sinners." It's because their sin became his sin because they, like, dined together. (And you can bet, that crowd included a few sinners)

Jesus said, "Make them sit down in groups" and they sat down in groups of *pentekonta*, fifty and a hundred. Remember in the wilderness, Moses had Israel divide into groups of fifty and a hundred? It was how the nation was to be judged (literally judged, that's what they were doing.) and joined together.

I was reading the other day in Exodus, about the church, that is the sanctuary, that is the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and how they were to build it. The tent of meeting was to literally be held together by fifty clasps on the edge of each piece of fabric. He keeps talking about these clasps.

The tabernacle is held together by groups of fifty. The apostles form groups of fifty and Jesus had a group of twelve, and in that group, a group of three. See, I think my job, and the leadership's job, is to take what we have, give it to Jesus in order to serve up the Word of God, and then distribute that word in groups – GROUPS. Yet, I think we naturally prefer crowds. You can be lost in a crowd, but you will be found in a group. I think we prefer crowds.

So, when the apostles say to us—the crowd (who came to hear Jesus Christ Super Star)—the church, "Y'all need to get into groups," something in us says, "Oh, man . . . ugh! I don't want to get in groups!" Why is that? Why don't we like - groups?

Now we can be honest with each other, right? We're family. So I am asking a question, and you can just shout out an answer. You've been to groups. Why don't you like groups?

Discussion between Peter and the congregation.

Woman 1: Because you can't hide.

Peter: You can't hide. Yep. And why do you want to hide? Because . . .

Man 1: Because there is a commitment.

Peter: Because there is commitment, yeah. And commitments can hurt, right? I mean . . . okay. Other things?

Man 2: Betrayal

Peter: Betrayal. You can be betrayed in a group! Right.

Woman 2: The other people are weird.

Peter: The other people are weird. That is so true! (Laughter is heard) Yeah. Anything else?

Woman 3: Because you can get crucified.

Peter: What? (the woman repeats it) You can get crucified. Yep. Lorrie

Woman 4: You feel really awkward

Peter: You feel awkward. You feel strange.

Woman 4: Especially at first. It's just awkward at first.

Peter: Yeah.

Man 3: People don't like sharing.

Peter: Don't like sharing.

Woman 5: Too busy.

Peter: Too busy.

Okay, now I anticipated most of these, I think. So, I made a list and I want to talk about why we don't like groups. And I think most of these things were in what I anticipated. You can see.

Why We Don't Like Groups:

Why We Don't Like Groups:

1. They're Dead

#1 They're dead.

Why We Don't Like Groups:

1. They're Dead
2. They're Stiff and Boring

#2 They're stiff and boring.

Why We Don't Like Groups:

1. They're Dead
2. They're Stiff and Boring
3. They're a Lot of Work

#3 They're a lot of work.

I think most people would agree with that assessment, which means most people are not picturing the kind of groups that Jesus is picturing.

In verse 39, Jesus commands his apostles to “recline” the people. That’s a verb, *anaklino*. The related noun is *klisia*. In Luke, the word translated group is *klisia*, which could be translated “recliner.” It was a place in which you would recline to eat a banquet.

So Jesus isn’t thinking work, but, rest. He commands them to “recline all groups by groups.” And the word for group is *sumposia*, which literally means a *drinking party*, which rarely implies “stiff and boring.” Which reminds us of Toby Keith and last week’s message, “I love this bar!” Which also reminds us of what they said on Pentecost, “Look at them! Those guys are drunk!”

Jesus commands the apostles to “recline all *sumposia* by *sumposia*, (all groups by groups) on to green grass. Then Mark writes, “They reclined *prasia* by *prasia*. *Prasia* is also translated group, but literally refers to a group of vegetables growing in a garden, not dead, but alive.

The disciples are commanded to do something *inorganic* (divide folks into groups), that something organic might happen, might grow, in order that good things could run wild.

Well, Jesus is picturing something a long ways from dead, stiff and boring. He’s picturing something alive, lubricated with grace and moving in peace and harmony. Gosh! We might like that kind of group. Makes you wonder what they do in that kind of group. What do they eat? What do they drink in that kind of group?

Well, anyway, why don’t we like groups?

Why We Don’t Like Groups:

1. They’re Dead
2. They’re Stiff and Boring
3. They’re a Lot of Work
4. You can get hurt... even crucified

#4 You can get hurt. . . even crucified in a group.

I mean, what if you end up in a group with Dr. Evil, not just weird, but evil? You can really get hurt in a group. You can be betrayed. You have to get close to someone to be betrayed by someone. You can be betrayed to the crowd and delivered up for crucifixion.

Why We Don’t Like Groups:

1. They’re Dead
2. They’re Stiff and Boring
3. They’re a Lot of Work
4. You can get hurt... even crucified
5. We don’t like to be judged

#5 We don’t like to be judged.

In other words, you think to yourself: “I don’t want to conform to their judgments and standards. We’re not all the same.” We don’t like to be judged.

Why We Don't Like Groups:

1. They're Dead
2. They're Stiff and Boring
3. They're a Lot of Work
4. You can get hurt... even crucified
5. We don't like to be judged
6. We don't like to judge

#6 We don't like to judge.

In other words, you think to yourself, "I don't want to hear your problems, because I don't know how to judge you and fix your problems."

Why We Don't Like Groups:

1. They're Dead
2. They're Stiff and Boring
3. They're a Lot of Work
4. You can get hurt... even crucified
5. We don't like to be judged
6. We don't like to judge
7. We don't get anything out of it

#7 We don't get anything out of it.

Why We Don't Like Groups:

1. They're Dead
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3. They're a Lot of Work
4. You can get hurt... even crucified
5. We don't like to be judged
6. We don't like to judge
7. We don't get anything out of it
8. We don't have anything to give

#8 We don't have anything to give to it.

In other words, we think: "Look, all I have is like five barley loaves and 2 fish." "All I have is poverty, this poverty of spirit" this mourning, this meekness, this hunger, hunger and thirst for righteousness. Well, when all you have is nothing, give your nothing.

Why We Don't Like Groups:

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 4. You can get hurt... even crucified
 5. We don't like to be judged
 6. We don't like to judge
 7. We don't get anything out of it
 8. We don't have anything to give
- BUT you can give your poverty

Give your poverty.

My Pastor friend, Tim, wrote in his suicide note "It is my own wretched weakness of which I am most ashamed." That jumped off the page at me when I read it, for it is *my* own wretched weakness of which *I* am most ashamed. I am really not ashamed of *your* wretched weakness. I am ashamed of my *own* wretched weakness. I've been working on this a long time. Yet Saint Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11: *"I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*

When I'm weak, then I'm strong. When I give my nothing, when I give my weakness, somehow I give God strength.

Have you ever been in a group where people constantly share their strength? Of course you have. You've been to junior high. You have. You have been to church meetings where people constantly share their strength. It's exhausting, stiff as hell and dead. It's a group of people trying to impress each other.

But, have you ever been in a group where people share their weaknesses? (And not as manipulation. Manipulation is using your weakness, to gain power over others.)

But have you ever been in a group where people just say, "I'm broken." A group where people just confess? Now Jesus warns us not to "cast our pearls before swine." You see, swine don't know that pearls are treasure and there are people that won't value your confession, the *crowd* won't value your confession. You know, a pearl is a piece of dirt encased in a jewel, much like our sins are covered with the grace of God. Well, have you ever been in a group where people believe in the grace of God and someone confesses, "I'm broken?"

For years, I was a youth pastor and lead all sorts of groups. Tenth grade boys were about the absolute worst. Getting them to talk was like trying to squeeze water from a stone. Until one night, out of the blue, the quiet kid, Brian Millar said, "Hey, do you guys ever think about killing yourself? I do." He gave his poverty to Jesus, in us, and my tenth grade small group Bible study turned into an absolute banquet. And Brian Millar's dirt turned into a pearl as those tenth grade boys covered it in God's grace.

The disciples gave the five loaves and two fish to Jesus. He blessed them and broke them and commanded the disciples to feed each other with that. On the night He was betrayed, He took the bread, blessed and broke it saying, "This is my body." He took the cup saying, "This is my blood."

In the morning, he hung on the tree, and into his body of flesh...

He absorbed the sin of the world.

He absorbed Brian Miller's self-hatred.

He absorbed Tim Brenner's self-hatred.

He absorbed your self-hatred and my self-hatred.

Then, his body was broken and his life spilled out, blood spilled out, grace spilled out.

God's grace is what they ate and drank

On those groups on the green grass

On the mountain that day long ago.

Now this is a deep and profound mystery that we could explore the rest of our lives and never fully grasp.

But, when you give your poverty in Jesus' name...

You give someone else the privilege of giving the grace of God in Jesus' name.

When you boast of your weaknesses...

You invite God's strength...

You somehow give Jesus.

Jesus took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body."

Scripture goes on to testify: "We *are* His body." "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," writes Paul. *We're* his body. Jesus said, "This is my body given to you."

You know, I learned all about Jesus from my slate of Christian Rock Stars, but I came to *know* Jesus through just a handful of people to whom I was allowed to get close enough to watch them be broken and experience what happened when they began to bleed, and I began to bleed – bleed blood – that turned to wine. And that's grace.

It really didn't matter whether they were broken by someone else's sin, my sin, their own sin, or just the circumstances of this fallen world. What mattered was that their pride, self-sufficiency, and their self-hatred, their earthen vessel was broken.

I'm thinking of people like my dad, my bride, and my friend, Andrew Traewick. I watched my father be broken and he bled Jesus. I watched my bride be broken, sometimes by me, and she bled Jesus and I bled Jesus. Andrew and I, several years ago, were broken together and we bled together.

Twenty-two years ago, when Susan and I moved from California back to Colorado, I said to my wife, "Honey, I'm going to be the senior pastor of this church and that means I'm going to become a thing." (Maybe even a rock star) I didn't say that but I could have. I said, "I'm going to become a thing." Well-intentioned people will think they know me and know you, but they'll only know about me and about you. But we need to know and be known. So, if we're going to survive, we better get in a group."

So, we called some old friends from high school for whom I wasn't the pastor, and said, "Could we just get together and pray and stuff?" We've met with the Reinkes, Parsons, and Traewicks now for twenty-two years. There's Alan and Jennifer (Peter points to the Parsons in the sanctuary). Alan and I knew each other when we were five. I spent the night at your house, right Alan? We've met weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, sometimes not at all. We've had Bible studies, book studies, no- studies, sometimes worship songs, other times prayer. Lately, we've just had dinner once a month. Seven years ago, everyone's life seemed to fall apart. We didn't meet for a while, but usually, Andrew Trawick and I would meet once a week and go for a walk.

Seven years ago, my earthen vessel, my ego, my accomplishments, my success, it all got shattered. And seven years ago, Andrew's ego, accomplishments and success all got shattered. We've known each other for thirty-seven years. He used to live at my house and we spent a lot of time trying to impress each other. But for the last seven years or so, every week, we just go for a walk.

I don't know how to judge or fix Andrew's brokenness. And I don't think he knows how to judge or fix mine. (And yet, I welcome everything he says, for it's all laced with grace. And grace seems to help.) We just go for a walk and share our hearts and through the cracks in Andrew's broken vessel every now and then, it's like I touch something eternal. And it helps me just to know it's there, or should I say, just to know that He's there. Jesus is there. Not knowledge *about* Jesus, but Jesus.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels." And we can see it, see him when they're broken.

The person next to you is a sacrament. You won't find Jesus in your spiritual rock stars. But you can meet Him in the broken person next to you. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." Now listen closely: There really is treasure, but there *really* is an earthen vessel. There is treasure, but it's buried in a field, so you need to expect a lot of dirt, and you need to expect a lot of crap.

You may spend your whole life digging in the field, or waiting for the vessel to crack. But, it's far more thrilling to find treasure buried in a field than to get it any other way. I mean, I know Andrew's dirt and that's what makes it all the more thrilling to find Jesus hiding there. It's like finding the King of Glory in a barn, or a precious baby in a manger. It's Christmas. You really can't know a rock star, because a rock star is an idol of your own creation. But you can know a baby and only God can make a baby.

Are you looking for Jesus?

There is a legend that God once asked wisdom for advice. He said, "I want to play a game of hide and seek with humankind. I asked my angels "Where is the best place to hide? Some said the depths of the ocean and some said the top of the highest mountain, others said the other side of the moon, or deep space. What do you say?" Wisdom said, "Hide in the human heart. It's the last place they'll think to look.

And Jesus, who is wisdom incarnate said, "Truly, truly, I say to you whatever you do to the least of these, my brothers, you do to me." And in the beginning God took clay, (vessels of clay) and breathed his Spirit into those earthen vessels and man became a living soul. It's clear that someone who asks for the Holy Spirit has the Holy Spirit. But, in some way, the Spirit of Jesus must be hiding in every human heart. We have this treasure in earthen vessels" and we come to find it when they're broken. The treasure is Jesus and Jesus is God given to us. He is grace.

You can learn *about* it through me. I actually learned *more* about it through the brokenness of Brennan Manning, Tony Campolo, Ron Davis and Paul of Tarsus. You can learn about it through me, but I think you can only know it, that is know Him, in a few, with whom you have the time and energy to break bread together. Jesus broke the bread and gave it to his small group and then *they* were broken and gave it, grace, to others. I wish we had time to explore this more fully, but when you give your poverty in Jesus' name....

Why We Don't Like Groups:

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 3. They're a Lot of Work
 4. You can get hurt... even crucified
 5. We don't like to be judged
 6. We don't like to judge
 7. We don't get anything out of it
 8. We don't have anything to give
- & you will get God's Grace
BUT you can give your poverty

You get grace in Jesus' name. You actually get Jesus!

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 8. We don't have anything to give
- ⌘ Grace will judge
⌘ you will get God's Grace
BUT you can give your poverty

And then you won't need to judge. The grace of God will judge. The blood of the Lamb will judge, and that blood becomes wine. God's grace will judge and God's grace will fix people.

Why We Don't Like Groups:

1. They're Dead
 2. They're Stiff and Boring
 3. They're a Lot of Work
 4. You can get hurt... even crucified
 5. We don't like to be judged
 6. We don't like to judge
 7. We don't get anything out of it
 8. We don't have anything to give
- ⌘ you will be judged... by Grace
⌘ Grace will judge
⌘ you will get God's Grace
BUT you can give your poverty

And you will be judged by grace. Laws and human energy make everyone the same, but grace makes unique individuals and then unites them as a body, bound by blood. It's true that you may get hurt. If you give your heart, someone can break your heart. But, if you guard your heart, your spirit remains alone. C.S. Lewis wrote *"The only place safe from the danger of Love is Hell."* So you can get hurt and even crucified.

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But God's grace will raise you from the dead. Grace is even strong enough for Dr. Evil.

Remember there was a guy in Jesus' small group, named Judas. Jesus picked Judas and Jesus loved Judas and I think there's every indication that although Judas descended into hell, we haven't heard the last of Judas. For Jesus descended into hell after him and led a host of captives free. For, after all, Jesus took bread broke it, and said to his entire small group (including Judas) "This is my body which is for you; eat it; drink it."

In John's account, Jesus commands the disciples to pick up all the broken pieces that none would be lost. "Jesus seeks and saves the lost, the perished." In Mark 6, Jesus is in Israel and the disciples pick up twelve *kophinos*, they were personal wicker baskets they used to carry, one for each disciple, one for each tribe. In Mark 8, Jesus is in the Decapolis, Gentile territory, and Jesus does the same thing, but the disciples pick up seven *spuris*, that's seven large

hampers of broken pieces. Twelve is the number of Israel, and seven the number of all creation. Jesus plans to feed *all* people with himself. So Jesus loves everyone in your group, no matter who's in your group. So you can love everyone in your group, because you're backed up by Jesus.

So, anyway, how does Jesus feed the world? He *is* the Word of God and the Bread of Life. He offers His body to be broken, and His life to be poured out, and then He asks us to sit down in groups and feed each other. So each weekend, we preach the word, break the bread, pour the wine, and we try to form groups. At the Sanctuary, we have two kinds.

1. Connect Gatherings, which are groups without any commitment that may entail all sorts of activities. This is how you begin to get connected and they center around some kind of activity, from gardening, to Bible study, to whatever.
2. Life groups, which *do* involve a commitment to share God's life and your life. Usually that means, a commitment to spend to for...

Some sort of study.

Sharing and prayer

Goofing around.

They don't have a leader (but a facilitator) for each person feeds the next person. It's not to be a chore, or a bore, or a class. It's to be like a *klisia*, a place to recline or a *sumposia*, a party or a bar, a *prasia*, a garden where things grow. It's how a crowd turns into a body and that's ...

Why We Don't Like Groups:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. They're Dead | they're Peace |
| 2. They're Stiff and Boring | ⌘ you will rise from the dead |
| 3. They're a Lot of Work | ⌘ you will be judged... by Grace |
| 4. You can get hurt... even crucified | ⌘ Grace will judge |
| 5. We don't like to be judged | ⌘ you will get God's Grace |
| 6. We don't like to judge | BUT you can give your poverty |
| 7. We don't get anything out of it | |
| 8. We don't have anything to give | |

Peace

Why We Don't Like Groups:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. They're Dead | they're joy |
| 2. They're Stiff and Boring | they're Peace |
| 3. They're a Lot of Work | ⌘ you will rise from the dead |
| 4. You can get hurt... even crucified | ⌘ you will be judged... by Grace |
| 5. We don't like to be judged | ⌘ Grace will judge |
| 6. We don't like to judge | ⌘ you will get God's Grace |
| 7. We don't get anything out of it | BUT you can give your poverty |
| 8. We don't have anything to give | |

Joy

Why We Don't Like Groups:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. They're Dead | they're Life... Jesus' Life |
| 2. They're Stiff and Boring | they're Joy |
| 3. They're a Lot of Work | they're Peace |
| 4. You can get hurt... even crucified | & you will rise from the dead |
| 5. We don't like to be judged | & you will be judged... by Grace |
| 6. We don't like to judge | & Grace will judge |
| 7. We don't get anything out of it | & you will get God's Grace |
| 8. We don't have anything to give | BUT you can give your poverty |

Life...Jesus' Life.

We are His body, being knit together by grace. If you're not already in a group, Kimberly and the Community Life team can help you get in a group. In January, we're having a weekend event here at the church to better equip our groups. Bob Hudson and Jolene Miller from our church, that lead cross Ministry groups, are going to lead here at the church to help jump start our groups. But I hope that somewhere in your life (okay, it doesn't have to be here because we're not the boss of all groups or something, and by the way your family is a group) you sit down in a group and grace is what's for dinner.

I read about a man who asked the Lord about heaven and hell. The Lord said to the man, "Come I will show you hell." They entered a room where a group of people sat around a huge pot of stew. Everyone was famished, desperate, and starving. Each held a spoon that reached the pot, but each spoon had a handle so much longer than their own arm, that it could not be used to get the stew into their own mouths. The suffering was immense and terrible. "Come now I will show you heaven," the Lord said after a while. They entered another room, identical to the first – the pot of stew, the group of people, the same long-handled spoons. But there everyone was happy and well nourished. "I don't understand," said the man. "Why are they happy here when they were miserable in the other room and everything was the same?" The Lord smiled. "It's simple," he said, "here they have learned to feed each other."

Communion

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus was reclining at table with his life group. And He took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat and do this in remembrance of me. And in the same way, after supper and having given thanks, He took the cup and He said, "This cup is the covenant in my blood, new covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you. Do this in remembrance of me." And so, this morning, we're going to eat the word of the Lord. Jesus is God's Word. And we are going to feed each other. Okay?

So, when you come forward, I want you to tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the white cup. That's juice. And then, turn around and just place it in the mouth of the person behind you. If you need gluten free, that's over here, but you can do the same thing at the gluten free station. And now, if you're saying, "Well, I'd kind of like a *symposia*." You can tap the person in front of you and say, "I'd like wine, please." And then they can dip it in the dark cup and turn around and feed you. So that means the first person who comes forward I'll feed, and the last person that comes forward, then you need to feed us, feed the communion servers. And if you have it twice in all the mix up, that's great because it's a banquet. And then let's worship. That's a picture of what God is calling us to be, a group of people that feed each other with His grace. In Jesus' name, let's believe the gospel and live.

(Worship songs are song. The final song is "Oceans"
Song: "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Hillsong

You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep
My faith will stand

And I will call upon your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am yours and You are mine

Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sovereign hand
Will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed and You won't start now
So I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and you are mine.

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Savior

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Savior

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Savior

Yeah
Oh Jesus, yeah, my God

I will call upon Your Name
Keep my eyes above the waves
My soul will rest in Your embrace
I am Yours and You are min.

Benediction

Amen. I didn't know they were going to end with that song, but I think it's appropriate and maybe God wants me to mention it, because the next thing that happens after they feed the five thousand is Jesus makes them get in the boat and they sail out on to that sea that, you remember from two weeks ago, is a picture of hell, and Peter walks on the water.

You know, a church is like that boat. But it's not held together with nails and glue, it's held together with the grace of God. And I think that God has called us to construct a boat and the boat is held together with God's grace and by our love for each other. I think the boat is supposed to sail somewhere. We're supposed to share the grace of God with the world. On the other side of the sea is the Decapolis, where Jesus multiplied the fish and the loaves for the nations. Well anyway, I think that's who we're supposed to be.

So, this is just my benediction to you. May you sit down in groups and serve each other the grace of God. May we, as one big group, sit down together and serve the grace of God. And then may we serve the world the grace of God. In Jesus' name.

Now before you go, let me just say Kimberly made these great flyers on community life groups in the back. If you'd like to be in a group, you can go to any one of the connect gatherings that are back there, but if you'd like to form a group that's more permanent, this is a great way to do it and you can talk to Kimberly. And I just want to say that it takes time, okay? Like I was telling you about my small group, meeting for twenty-two years. People have come and gone or whatever, but we've been able to do that. But we want to help foster those kind of groups. So if you're interested in that, grab one of these brochures and you can get your information to Kimberly.

In January, we'll be pulling those groups together and kind of supercharging them. If you need prayer, the prayer team members are out front, and if you are new, we have a connect station in the back where she will answer any questions. See you next week.

If you are interested in forming a group or joining a group, please contact:
kimberly@thesanctuarydowntown.org

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.