Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Year B

Focus: Ordinary Time

Scripture: Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 NRSV

Gathering
Welcome

Prayer for Peace

Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O, Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

—Saint Francis of Assisi

Spiritual Practice
Chalice Prayer

Create a cup, or chalice, with your hands and hold it in front of you at chest level.
We will use the chalice as a symbolic vessel to offer thoughts and concerns to God. Each
time you fill the chalice, raise it overhead with your face tilted upward, and then open your
hands. Spread your arms out and down to your sides as you release the concerns in the chalice to God.

Let us begin:

Create a chalice with your hands. Imagine placing into the chalice:
- The Earth and all the creatures of the land, sea, and air.
- The wounds of pollution and depletion.
- All peoples of the Earth with their poverty and surplus, joy and grief, violence and goodness.

Raise the chalice overhead with your face tilted upward. Open your hands and spread your arms out and down to your sides as you release the concerns in the chalice to God.

Create a chalice with your hands. Imagine placing into the chalice:
- Your loved ones, your extended family, your church community, and friends.
- Those from whom we feel separated due to anger, hurt feelings, poor choices, or pride.

Raise the chalice overhead with your face tilted upward. Open your hands and spread your arms out and down to your sides as you release the concerns in the chalice to God.

Create a chalice with your hands. Imagine placing into the chalice:
- Yourself, as you are in God's sight.
- Your deepest needs, your gifts, your weaknesses.
- Your desires for healing and wholeness.

Raise the chalice overhead with your face tilted upward. Open your hands and spread your arms out and down to your sides as you release the concerns in the chalice to God.

Conclude the chalice prayer by saying aloud, “We release these to you, O God, to be loved and healed as only you can love and heal. Amen.”

Sharing Around the Table
Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 NRSV

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 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. 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; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him and rushed about that
whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

The apostles return to Jesus and tell him all they have been doing in his name. They have been so busy with so many people coming with needs that they have not even had time to eat. Jesus encourages them to leave the crowds and rest.

But when the disciples retreat by boat, the crowds anticipate their destination and hurry to meet them. Instead of expressing frustration, Jesus “had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.”

Sheep without a shepherd may refer to irresponsible or absent shepherds who leave the sheep scattered. Or it may point to religious and political leaders of the day who failed in their duty to care for the hungry, weak, and powerless.

As today’s passage continues, Jesus and his disciples travel by boat to Gentile territory. The people on the shore recognize him and rush to bring those who were sick or crippled to Jesus for healing. These “foreigners” recognize the power in Jesus ministry. They had faith that just touching the tassels that hung at the corners of his cloak would bring healing and blessing.

The compassion of Jesus for both Jew and Gentile stands in stark contrast to leaders who neglect the needs of the people while profiting from the oppressive constraints of foreign occupation, poverty, prejudice, and persecution.

Questions

1. When have you felt tired or stretched to your limit but found the strength to “have compassion” on someone?
2. What spiritual disciplines help strengthen your discipleship?
3. Who are the Gentiles in your world, those who are “foreign” to you? How have you “crossed the sea” to share compassion, friendship, kindness, or hospitality with them?

Sending

Generosity Statement

“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f). We receive God’s grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

This month’s offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

Generous God, Be with each of us as we manage our time, treasure, talent, and witness. May we use all our resources in ways that express our desire to bring blessings of healing and peace into the world. May we focus our giving on your purposes, and may our hearts be aligned with your heart. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 217, “When the World Is Babbling Round Us”
Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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Communion Statement

We come together to share in the Lord’s Supper “as a visible witness of loving Christian fellowship and shared remembrance of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:4a).
All committed followers of Christ are invited to partake, but no one should feel pressured to receive the emblems.
We share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.
In preparation let’s sing from Community of Christ Sings (select one):

515, “In these Moments We Remember”
516, “Coming Together for Wine and for Bread”
521, “Let Us Break Bread Together”
525, “Small Is the Table”
528, “Eat This Bread”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: smiley face, Band-Aids, can of soup
Hold up the smiley face and ask: Has anyone ever come to cheer you up when you were sad?
Hold up the can of soup and ask: Have you ever been sick, and someone fixed you something to eat to help you feel better?
Hold up the Band-Aids and ask: Have you ever been hurt, and someone brought you a Band-Aid?

All those things are acts of compassion. Compassion is love in action. When we show others we love them we act with compassion.

As children respond to the following questions, give each two or three paper hearts to symbolize compassion: love in action.
From the Bible we learn Jesus had compassion for all people. He fed them if they were hungry and healed them if they were sick. Jesus visited people who did not have friends.
So if someone is lonely, how would you show compassion?
If someone is not feeling well, how might you show compassion?
If someone falls and scrapes a knee, what can you do to show compassion?
Encourage children to share the hearts (compassion) with everyone in the group as they return to their seats. Ensure everyone receives a heart.