

LENTEN DEVOTIONALS

WEEK 4: JESUS PRAYED WITH A THANKFUL HEART

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 14:19-21

Then Jesus ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

REFLECTION

During the years that Jesus traveled and taught on earth, he spent time with many people. Thousands and thousands of people. Sometimes he met with people in their homes or in the street or in the temple. And other times Jesus was with large groups of people. In our Matthew passage today, we see a powerful example of Jesus caring for and teaching many people.

At the beginning of this story, Jesus is with a large crowd. This crowd had been learning from and listening to Jesus for most of the day, and it was dinner time. But there was a problem. They were far away from any town, and there definitely wasn't a fast food restaurant on the road or a delivery person who could come to the rescue. The only food available included five loaves of bread and two fish. Certainly not enough food to feed Jesus and his disciples, let alone many people. How did Jesus respond to this situation? He didn't complain or try to find a quick fix. Instead, Jesus takes the meal and blesses it (in other words, he thanks God for the food). And what happens? After thanking God, God provides more than enough food for all the people. What a miracle!

What was Jesus trying to teach the crowd then and teach us today? Perhaps it is the lesson of approaching God in prayer with a spirit of thankfulness. Sometimes we forget to remember and be thankful for others and to God. When we remember to be thankful and live a thankful life, thankfulness can grow in our lives and be in the lives

of others. This week, Jesus reminds us of the importance of giving thanks to God and remembering how thankfulness can spread to people around us.

DISCUSSION

As you color the coloring page, ponder these questions together:

- Imagine you were one of the people in the crowd with Jesus that day and it was dinner time. What are some things you would have thought or said? How would you respond to Jesus after he thanked God for the food?
- Do you say thank you to God when you pray? If yes, what are some things you're thankful for? If no, what are some things for which you could offer thanks?
- Take a little time to think about last week. Who were some people who were helpful to you? What is one moment when you felt thankful?

ACTIVITY

Supplies needed: This week's activity page, markers/crayons/pencils, envelopes, stamps

This week, we invite your family to practice thankfulness together. Take some time together to pick someone or a group of people to be thankful for each day this week. As a family, use the "Thank You" activity page provided to write or draw words of thankfulness for that person or group and then either mail that person the completed "Thank You" activity page or share it with them in some way (photo, social media, in person).

PRAYER

Dear Jesus,

This week we want to simply say:

Thank you.

Thank you for leading us

Teaching us

Blessing us

Bearing with us

Forgiving us

Loving us.

Help us to practice thankfulness

Toward you and others today, this week, this month,

Until it becomes as natural to us as our breath.

With thankful hearts, we pray,

Amen.