

Sermon for August 2, 2026 – The 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 14:13–21 (EHV)

Theme: Our Compassionate Christ

- 1) Invites Us to Seek Him
- 2) Calls Us to Trust Him

¹³When Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place to be alone. When the crowds heard this, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large crowd. He had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵When evening came, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place and the hour is already late. Send the crowds away, so that they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” ¹⁶But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” ¹⁷They told him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸“Bring them here to me,” he replied. ¹⁹Then he instructed the people to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fish. After looking up to heaven, he blessed them. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples. The disciples gave the food to the people. ²⁰They all ate and were filled. They picked up twelve basketfuls of what was left over from the broken pieces. ²¹Those who ate were about five thousand men, not even counting women and children.

Someone once said: “Experience is something you gain only after you need it.” Trust operates on a similar principle.

It’s easy to trust Christ with a full fridge and only yourself to feed. But what about when the fridge is empty – when your limited resources can barely address your needs, let alone those of the many others God has placed under your care?

It’s moments like these, when your needs and responsibilities increase beyond what you can handle, that your “trust” in God is most valuable. And precisely in such moments is our trust also most vulnerable.

How do we survive such trying times with our faith intact? By turning to our compassionate Christ. 1) He invites us to seek Him. 2) He calls us to trust Him.

Part One: Our Compassionate Christ Invites Us To Seek Him

Our sermon text takes place as Jesus’ Galilean ministry drew toward its close. To the shock of many, Herod had put John the Baptist to death. Moreover, when Herod got wind of what Jesus was doing, he worried Jesus might be John the Baptist returned from the dead.

¹³When Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place to be alone.

Understand Jesus' actions correctly: He did not flee to a deserted place because He feared Herod. Quite the contrary. The other Gospels inform us that the disciples had just returned from mission journeys that Jesus had sent them on without Him. He needed alone time with " to discuss their experiences, what happened to John the Baptist, and to prepare them for the next chapter in His ministry.

Just as Christ's compassion moved Him to gather His disciples to a quiet place where He could spend quality time alone with them, so His compassion gathers us to a quiet place to spend quality alone time with Him. Where is that place? Here in worship or Bible study. The quiet place to which Jesus calls you is also at home when you have a devotion with your family or read the Bible for your personal edification. The quiet place to which our Saviour invites us is His Word and Sacraments. Through these means, He strengthens our trust in Him, offers us hope in all trouble, and prepares us not only for this life but also for the life to come. Yes, Jesus constantly calls you to come with Him to a quiet place, but do you heed His call? Do you seek Him out as the treasured friend and Saviour that He is?

That is what the people of Galilee did. We read:

When the crowds heard this (that Jesus withdrew to a quiet place with His disciples), they followed him on foot from the towns.

Even though the crowds didn't fully understand Jesus' mission, they trusted His compassion. Carrying their sick, they walked miles to find Jesus. Why? Because they were hurting. Many in the crowd were ill. Others were lonely and needed someone to care for them. All of them were like sheep without a shepherd – harassed, helpless, and in need of salvation.

¹⁴When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large crowd. He had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Take a moment to appreciate what Jesus did. He originally left with His disciples so the crowds wouldn't bother them. He had every reason to send them away, but He didn't. Instead of being filled with frustration, Jesus is filled with compassion. He pities and desires to help them with their physical hurts. Moreover, He sees an even deeper harm that many in the crowd didn't recognize in themselves. He saw their sins' guilt and how it separated them from God.

So, what does Jesus do about it? After healing the sick, He preaches His Law and Gospel to the multitude. Jesus' compassion moved Him to help the crowd, just as it moves Him to help us.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever you are feeling emotionally, physically, or spiritually at wits' end, don't try to tough it out on your own. Do what the Galilean crowd did and seek Jesus. How? By calling to Him in prayer and making every effort to be where He can be found. And

where can Jesus be found? Wherever His Word is taught in truth and purity, as He told His disciples on another occasion: “*Whoever listens to you listens to me.*”ⁱ In other words, wherever Christians gather around God’s Word, Jesus is present – ready to instruct, warn, forgive, comfort, and guide. He is with us now in worship. He will be with us in Bible class. He is present with every family that sits down for devotion. He is with every person who prayerfully meditates on the Bible. Yes, wherever the Gospel is, there you will find Christ ready to shower His compassion upon you.

Therefore, make every effort to seek Jesus out. Did time, distance, or sickness keep the crowds from searching for Jesus? No. Why not? Because they trusted in His power and compassion to help. Let the same confidence in Christ’s compassion move you to seek Christ out, regardless of the inconveniences or hardships that stand in your way. Trust in His love and power to help, for He is faithful and keeps every promise He makes.

Part Two: Our Compassionate Christ Calls Us To Trust Him

By showing the crowd compassion, Jesus wanted to teach His disciples another vital lesson: to trust His providential power as they show compassion to those God puts before them.

From another Gospel account, we learn that when Jesus first saw the crowd, He asked one of His disciples (probably in earshot of all the others), “*Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?*” But Jesus was saying this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.ⁱⁱ

Do you understand why Jesus asked His disciples to buy food for all the people even when He knew they couldn’t? He wanted them to remember who He is: the divine Son of God, who rules over heaven and earth. Where would the disciples get food to feed over 5000 people? They couldn’t get it from anywhere except Jesus Himself. Would they remember what Jesus did at the wedding at Cana or all the other times He revealed His miraculous, divine power?

Jesus probably wanted His disciples to answer: “LORD, we can’t provide for all these people, but we trust You can. Tell us what You want us to do, and we will do it. We trust Your power to provide.” Sadly, this isn’t what they said. Instead, they spent their time worrying and fretting — so much so that:

¹⁵*When evening came, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place and the hour is already late. Send the crowds away, so that they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”*

Oh, how sad the disciples’ response was. Instead of asking Jesus to provide a way, they tell Him to send the people away. And isn’t that how we also deal with the dilemmas God puts in our lives?

Jesus tells us not to worry about anything, that He will provide.ⁱⁱⁱ We are willing to trust Him when the resources are there. But when they’re not, then what? We fret and worry. Still worse, we try to avoid the responsibilities Jesus lays on us. “Send them away,” we think. “Let someone

else take care of them because we can't" – all the while forgetting who Jesus is and what He promises to accomplish through us.

¹⁶But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

Isn't Jesus' response interesting? Even though there was no conceivable way the disciples could do what He asked, He commands them: "You give them something to eat." It's as if He were saying: "Don't you feel the same compassion for the crowd that I feel? Don't you care that they are hungry, sick, and in need of the forgiveness and salvation that only I can offer? Love them as I love them!"

But Jesus was asking the impossible!

¹⁷They told him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸"Bring them here to me," he replied.

Despite their meager resources, Jesus calls upon His disciples to trust in Him. It's not what they have or can offer that makes a difference, but who He is and what He promises!

Jesus invites us to trust Him as well. Don't focus on how little you have or how powerless you are in a situation. Bring what you have and are to Jesus. Trust Him to forgive your sins. Trust Him to provide what you need.

"But how can I do this when everything seems so bleak?" By hearing again what God has already done for you, and letting that promise do its work on you, as the apostle Paul once wrote: *Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?*^{iv}

Because God has given you everything in Christ, you can trust Him to give you everything your body and soul need. More than that, you can trust Him to work through the little you have to offer others to accomplish the great things He desires to do, as our sermon text continues.

¹⁹Then he instructed the people to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fish. After looking up to heaven, he blessed them. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples. The disciples gave the food to the people. ²⁰They all ate and were filled. They picked up twelve basketfuls of what was left over from the broken pieces. ²¹Those who ate were about five thousand men, not even counting women and children.

As the last verses of our text reveal, the whole reason Jesus asked His disciples to do the impossible was so He could reveal His power and providence as they placed their trust in Him.

Jesus wants you and me to learn the same lesson. Don't let limited resources cause you to worry and fret over how you can show the love God commands you to show. Trust in Christ. Does God often ask you to do more than you can? Absolutely. But He does this to keep you from relying on yourself. He does this to exercise your trust in Him to accomplish everything He promises.

Yes, even if you have little – if you don't know how you will provide for yourself, let alone the people God puts under your care – don't fret and worry, thinking that it's up to you alone to solve every problem.

Remember the compassion your Christ has for you and all people – a compassion so deep that He sacrificed Himself to save you. Heed His invitation to seek Him, even when it seems as if He doesn't want to be found. Heed His call to trust Him – to bless both you and others through you in accordance with His Word. Amen.

ⁱ Luke 10:16 EHV

ⁱⁱ John 6:5-6 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Philippians 4:6, Matthew 6:25ff

^{iv} Romans 8:32 EHV