

## Jesus' Popularity

*Mark 6:30-34; 53-56*

Our passage says, "So many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat." Ever have one of those days? Or maybe one of those weeks, or months? Isn't this an amazing description of our lives, crazily running around taking care of business but missing the most important things in life?

This is a passage about an ordinary day. Our verses give a few small reports, and some details about travel and the busyness of life. But we also hear that Jesus' ministry to the people was finally gaining traction. People heard about him and knew about him and wanted to see and be with him. Jesus gathers the disciples to go away and get some rest, but the crowds find them and the crowd's desire to be healed starts all over again.

And how does Jesus react to this craziness? He tried to get away and pray, but the crowds appeared again. What did Jesus do? Did he say, "We need some rest! Go away!" Did he say, "We are praying: leave us alone?" No, he didn't say that at all. In fact, he boated over to Gennesaret, which was a place where warm mineral springs were at the edge of the Sea of Galilee. This was a place that where people came to be healed—So Jesus sailed **to where all the sick people were**, and Jesus got busier than ever. Jesus says he wants to get away to be alone, but God had different plan: God sent Jesus where the greatest need was.

Well, let's pray together. E pule kākou, "Dear God who reminds us to always take time for you, what happens when life gets boring and ordinary? O Lord, Help us when we are bored! Amen."

Here we are in the middle of the church season called Ordinary time—that time in the church calendar after Easter and before Christmas. We are not preparing for a holiday, we are just being ordinary in ordinary time. And into our Ordinary times comes an ordinary story, telling us about the day-to-day lives of Jesus and the disciples. But we all know that ordinary is boring, right? Well, our story may be ordinary, but it is not boring—to these people being healed, let me tell you, it was not boring!

But we have to do a little digging to see the details of daily life here, because these details are where we find our relationships with God and one another. We think life is about the special days and special times, but almost all of our life is just plain and ordinary—but that does not mean it isn't good and wonderful and challenging and full of mana.

One of the things I love most about Waiola is that we take a moment every week and have a meal together. After worship we will gather in Keōpūolani and share an ordinary meal together. But while the meal may be ordinary, that does not mean it is not very special. We will be joined by our guests and now 'ohana of Kukulu Kumuhana who will hold their closing ho'ike during fellowship together. It will be a very special time for them as they talk story and reflect on what they have learned and gained and discovered for themselves about their Hawaiian culture, and what it means to be **together**. As they share, they will do what we always do together, we will make the time together sacred as we share our journey with ke Akua and each other.

In many ways, what we share together and what our passage talks about today are very similar. When we walk over to Keōpūolani, we may think one thing will happen, and before we know what is going on, ke Akua sweeps something else in front of us. Isn't that what was happening in our scripture story today? Jesus thought he was going to get away, but instead, he came to even more people in need. This teaches us a lesson: We cannot control what happens in our lives: we can only control how we respond to life. And how did Jesus and the disciples **respond** to their changing circumstances?

Well, they did God's ordinary work. They loved each other. They healed and visited and felt compassion for the people they met who were in pain or suffering, those who were hungry, or homeless or alone. They were pono neighbors with each other. They lived as the Hawaiian culture calls all of us to live, in deep respect and aloha for one another. At Genessaret they brought the sick to Jesus and they were healed. And even though Jesus was exhausted he turned no one away. He built community, and loved everyone.

What Jesus DID is the important thing. He listened. He felt deep compassion for all those he met. People were healed where they were. The religious people of Jesus' day all stayed safely in their synagogues—their houses of worship—loudly praying and saying they were holy, but Jesus went out in the middle of the mess, out to the people, and treated everyone with aloha and had compassion for them, and they were healed. ON an ordinary day, Jesus was doing very **un**ordinary things. He was working in love, and love changes ordinary things into extraordinary things.

Whenever the Gospel has a scene where **everyone** is healed, I stop and wonder a moment about what this means for me. In some places Jesus healed individuals. But here, Jesus was healing everyone everywhere. He was healing the community. The healing was no longer personal, but now it was **communal**—the **community** was now being healed in aloha. Jesus could not control the people coming to see him, but he could control how he responded. And he chose to respond with healing aloha.

For me, it is easy to be a faithful Christ-follower on the fancy holidays like Christmas and Easter. But here in ordinary time, in ordinary Lahaina, at ordinary Waiola, on this ordinary Sunday, it becomes a bit more challenging to be faithful to ke Akua when things are just "ordinary." Here in Lahaina in July it is hot, and the sun beats down on us fiercely, it would be so easy to stay home in the air conditioning rather than come to church. But gathering together reminds us of the miracles that happen around us **everyday**. We gather to be with one another to hear our stories of life – to be reminded of the everyday miracle of our life. We gather to remind one another that we are loved by God unconditionally, and that we live in this amazing, abundant and glorious community together. Being here with you is a miracle. Worshipping with you is a miracle. Being with these youth this weekend and watching them learn and grow in faith and culture is a miracle, and we thank ke Akua and their kumu for all they have learned and taught one another—and US.

So anybody can be faithful on the holidays! But Jesus asks for us to be faithful in the **ordinary** times, to expect healing miracles in the ordinary days. Jesus asks us to remember that ke Akua is **always** with us, that ke Akua **always** loves us,

and that ke Akua **always** wants us to share our aloha with **everyone—even in the plain ordinary times**. **Because when we share aloha, we** change the ordinary onto the extraordinary, **we** become the hands of God forming a pono world.

**Aloha ke Akua!** Say it with me, “Aloha ke Akua!” Amene.