

Friday in the Second Week of Easter

April 16, 2021

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

Acts 5: 34–42; Psalm 27:1–6; Matthew 4:4b; John 6: 1–15*

Monday through Thursday of this second week of Easter, our gospel lessons were from the third chapter of John: “Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the dominion of God.’”¹

From today, the lectionary has us skipping two significant chapters, the fourth and the fifth. The fourth chapter tells the story of Jesus’ encounter with the woman of Samaria at the well. Unlike his encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus knows that this woman can come to faith. In their conversation, when she tries to avoid his words, he pivots and brings her closer to believing. You may recall, Jesus knows she has had five husbands—and the man with whom she is living is not her husband. Jesus is unconcerned by her past or her present. She is overwhelmed by what he knows. The story ends with these words, “Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.’”² Note: Samaritans were not considered to be Judeans.

In the fifth chapter, Jesus is in Jerusalem. and on a sabbath day, he heals a man who was lame. But the man is not open to understanding what his

¹ John 3:1–3.

² John 4:39–42.

healing really means. He does not seek Jesus out to thank him, much less to prostrate himself in worship. But Jesus finds him. And when the man who was lame knows who has healed him, he goes to identify him to the authorities as the man who healed him.

After more teaching by Jesus about his relationship to the Father, we arrive at today's gospel lesson, the first fifteen verses of chapter six, the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. The setting of the fifth chapter was about Jesus' authority on a sabbath day; this chapter is about his authority at the feast of the Passover.

In Mark, Matthew, and Luke, Jesus gives the disciples the bread and fish to distribute to the crowd. In John, "Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted."³ Later, Jesus told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost."⁴

John is the gospel in which every believer is in a direct relationship with the Son. It's in Luke that Jesus instructs his disciples about their responsibilities with these words. "So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"⁵ Still, I think these words could have ended up in John, and they would seem right at home:

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

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³ John 6:11.

⁴ John 6:12.

⁵ Luke 17:10.