

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of March 22, 2009
"Participating in Jesus' Ministry"**

[Today we're going to talk about how we, as individuals and a congregation, can "follow Jesus" and join him in what he is doing and participate in his ministry.]

[Topics: Ministry; Participation; Trusting in God; Outreach Opportunities]

Excerpt: As Jesus began his ministry, he went to Peter, Andrew, James and John and others and, "Come follow me." And they would begin to follow him and walked in his footsteps as he traveled the roads of Palestine learning what he was doing. They watched him to see how he handled life. And at times, he would send them out on their own to see how they would do by themselves.

But the question for us today is this: Do we find ourselves **following Jesus** or do we come up with a pretty good idea for our ministries and **ask Jesus to follow us**? Do we pray, "Dear God, please bless us because we're going to do this." Christians are well known for doing this.

Pastor Glen had a dear old pastor friend who said that his church board meeting worked like this. You put five good ideas on the table and we beat the hell out of them. And the one that survives, we go do that and ask Jesus to bless it. Now he may have exaggerated a little bit. But the principle is true – we ask God to bless our ideas.

What we really need to be doing is asking God, "What are you doing? How can we follow you?" Today's message is going to pick up on some of the material that Dan Rogers spoke about in the Regional Conference as well as follow up on our message of three weeks ago, where we discussed how God is in this relationship as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and how God desires to draw us into that relationship and experience it. And then also share this experience with someone else – not just to get them saved, not just to have them know Jesus, but to really come into this incredible relationship.

So how does understanding impact how we do ministry, as individuals and as a congregation? What will that look like as we go along? Let's turn to Mark 6 beginning in verse 30. Now we know that the disciples have been following Jesus for a while and then he sends them out on a short mission trip. He tells them not to take any clothes or money. Just go down to the local village and pray for the sick, cast out demons and do some of the things that he's been doing.

And so they did. And now they have come back. **30) "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught."** This was probably an exciting moment for them to recount what happened -- demons left, people got well, similar to what Jesus did in his ministry.

31) "Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'" Jesus was telling them that they needed to get some rest.

32) " So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33) But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them." So the nice quiet spot that they had sought to go to was now full of people.

34) "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things."

So even though Jesus and the disciples didn't have a chance to eat yet and they are tired, Jesus has compassion on them and takes time to minister to them. So Jesus begins to teach them even out of his tiredness.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes your opportunity to do ministry come at the time when you feel least like doing it? You're just so tired, and you've had a hard week, and you have other things going on – and all of sudden here's an opportunity. And you say to yourself, "Not right now." But God says to you, "Yes, this is the time. This is when you need to minister to others because now you will do it in my strength not yours."

35) "By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. 'This is a remote place,' they said, 'and it's already very late. 36) Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.'"

So it's one thing to minister to a large group of people, but now it's dinnertime and the people are tired and hungry. The disciple's answer was for Jesus to tell them to go away and get their own food. But Jesus said, "No, this is when we really get to minister. This is the big opportunity.

37) "But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.'" This is an interesting verse. Remember back in verse 30, the disciples had told Jesus all the things that they had done on this mission trip. They knew that God had been working with them. They had done all these wonderful works in Jesus' name.

And so Jesus now tells them that this is another opportunity. But it's a big opportunity – they would have to feed 5000 people. So Jesus says to them, "You feed them." So what did the disciples do? They immediately went to the physical, which is often what we do. When an opportunity comes along, we think of what we don't have or think that we're not qualified or we haven't been taught how to do something, or what if I say the wrong thing, etc.

"They said to him, 'That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?'" In essence they tell Jesus that it would be impossible for them to do this.

38) 'How many loaves do you have?' he asked. 'Go and see.' When they found out, they said, 'Five – and two fish.' Now let's think about that for a minute. Where do you think that they found 5 loaves and 2 fish? One account said a little boy had the food. But do you suppose that this was their lunch? The disciples were thinking to themselves, "Do you know how long this little food will last in a crowd of 5000 people?"

Now lets ask the question, "What do we have?" Jesus is telling us that he has a whole bunch of people that he wants us to minister to -- in Eagle Rock, Pasadena, Highland Park,

Glendale, the whole area out there. So what do we have? What are our resources? What's in our lunch pail?

At this point in his sermon, Pastor Glen asked the members of the congregation to give him their thoughts as to what are our resources. Here are some of the answers.: we have a lot of different ministries; musical talent; friendliness and large ethnic diversity; funding; diverse generations; time; vehicles; God's Spirit; seasoned Christians; great facility; lot of teachers; grace; a relationship with God that we can share with others.

So, as we can see, we have all kinds of gifts and resources that could use to multiply and touch others. What is it that God can do with what we have? And what does he want to do? Why did he put all those resources in our group? And how can he use those resources he's given us to connect with others.

Another question we need to ask ourselves: What are our 5 loaves and 2 fish? What has God given you personally? Maybe you are one of those musicians or one of those teachers. What is it that God has given you? The Bible says that God has given us everything we need for godliness and for doing we he needs us to do.

So we need to ask God, "What is it that you have given me so that I can connect with people around me? In a minute, we're going to see that Jesus is working all around us. The trick is to see where he's working and how's he working and then connect into that. Perhaps we need to spend some time this week and think about what God has given us individually? And then ask God, how am I going to offer it to you?

39) "Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40) So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties." So Jesus organizes the people into groups of hundreds and fifties. Wonder where he got that from? Well, it came out of the OT where Moses had Israel organized like that.

And, of course, we do have a well-organized congregation. That's another one of our gifts that God has given us. We are pretty good at organizing all kinds of things.

41) "Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves." Jesus offers what food they have to God and asks him to help them feed this crowd. We're going to ask God to help impact Eagle Rock, Pasadena, and other areas. We going to ask God to help us to impact the people in whatever community we live in. We offer our talents for God to use it and multiply it for your kingdom, because we have a job here that's way bigger than us.

"Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all." Now here's the question. How many of you have catered a meal for 200-300 people? It's a lot of work. Now think about how much effort it would take for one man to break bread for 5000 people. Jesus would probably have had blisters on his fingers before he broke bread for the first 100 people.

We tend to think that Jesus broke all the bread. That's not true. Jesus divided the bread into a basket for each disciple. And then each disciple went to the various groups of fifties and one hundreds and broke off bread for them. If the 12 disciples broke off all the bread for

5000, it would take them all night. But that's not how it happened. The leader of each group broke off bread for their people.

The lesson from this is that Jesus shared his ministry with us. He wants us to participate in his ministry. Jesus could have prayed to the Father and "boom" there could have been a loaf of bread and a fish in every person's lap instantaneously. He didn't, because that's not how Jesus does ministry.

Too often we pray and ask God to fix the problems of the world. And God answers, "That's why I sent you." God could fix the world by just snapping his fingers. But has chosen not to do that. God has started his church and he wants us to impact the world. He wants us to turn the world upside down like the early church did. God invites us to participate in the ministry that he is already doing.

So Jesus breaks bread for the 12 disciples and they go around to the groups of 50 and a 100. And then the 50 and a 100 begin to feed their people. And when they're done they have a whole bunch of food left over.

42) "They all ate and were satisfied, 43) and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44) The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand."

Jesus fed the 5000 until they were all full. They had 12 baskets of food left over, which was far more than what they had started with. So Jesus let everyone be involved in this ministry of expanding the loaves and fishes. The lesson for the disciples is that you go out and minister and Jesus will take care of everything. Jesus wants us participating in his ministry.

Now as mentioned earlier, New Hope has printed up a 1000 business cards that have a special color picture on the front of them of a cross at sunrise that has the time and location of our special services during Easter season. By having these cards all of us members can participate in ministry as we figure out who we can give these cards to.

As you're getting your hair done, you can hand out one of these cards and tell the person that we're having some special services over Easter season and invite to them to join us. Or you can give it out to a waitress in a restaurant. There are many opportunities. By doing so, you are "breaking bread." And you never know what conversation this little card might start between you and that person. We can tell them where some more bread will be available.

And so by doing this, we can participate in the ministry of Jesus. And so we need to look for those opportunities to do ministry with Jesus. We need to look for opportunities for how God wants us to touch someone, because Jesus is working all the time.

We all know the great commission. Let's read it again in **Matthew 28** beginning in **verse 18**. **"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'"** Jesus is saying that he has been given everything it takes to get the job done. The Father has commissioned him to do it all. Jesus wants us to be encouraged that we are going out in his authority.

19) "Therefore go (As you are going is a more accurate translation of the Greek) and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus is always with us through the Holy Spirit. How encouraging. And he's with all the people around us. That's one of the wonderful things we've come to understand lately. It's that Jesus Christ has reconciled everyone to the Father – 2 Corinthians 5:19. The Bible also tells us that Jesus sustains everybody and everything. Now it's just a matter as to whether individuals will respond to that.

Here is what Jesus is saying. I want you to know what my ministry is going to be. What I'm doing in your neighborhood. And he says, "I'm sending my people." And so we go.

And then he says, "I will be drawing disciples." So we go and find them.

Next he says, "I'll be leading them to baptism. I'll be putting a heart in them that they will want to be baptized." So we baptize them.

"And I'm also going to make them hungry to want to know things." So we teach them.

You see it's not us generating this. It's the work of Jesus that's drawing people to himself. It's the Holy Spirit that brings conviction. It's the Holy Spirit that is leading people and God wants us to participate in that. We need to work with the ministry of Jesus and tell people, "Let me help you. Let me show you the way."

You know that we may give out a 1000 cards in the next few weeks and have nobody come as a result of it. But you don't know how many people are going to put that card on their refrigerator. And some day, they're going to need God. The Holy Spirit will work something in their life, that they will have a need, that they have a crisis of some kind, like a death in the family, or someone that's in the hospital with cancer and they see that card on the refrigerator and say, "I know who I need to get a hold of."

So the seed may not bear fruit in the next couple of weeks. We shouldn't worry about that. If it does – great. But what it will do is to plant seed for possible future growth and future connection with people.

Jesus is working. **John 5:17, "Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.'"** Now that was in the context of the religious leaders complaining about what Jesus was doing on the Sabbath. But the point is, Jesus is active. He didn't go off to heaven and fold his arms and say, "I'll just hang out here until I get to go back to fix things."

No, he sent the church to participate in his ministry. What Ron and Cora and the others of you do down at the Bad Weather Shelter and at Union Station and some of the other things that you do, is all planting seed – that we are all walking in Jesus' ministry. And as a congregation we want to look for more ways to participate with God.

Summer camp is another great example of inviting as many kids as you know to go to camp. Our goal should be to invite about half the kids to attend that don't go to our church and who are not part of any other church. This is a great outreach opportunity.

Young people arrive at summer camp and by the end of day one, most of them, who haven't attended before say, "I hate this. I want to go home." And you know what, by the last day they are crying and saying, "Don't make me go back home!" Five days creates a miracle in the heart of a kid. Isn't that amazing. Five days of people loving on them and telling them that Jesus loves them changes them.

So Jesus is working all around. He's inviting us to participate in his ministry. He wants us to be involved. We want to be following Jesus and not going off and doing our thing and asking Jesus to bless it. We want to look at what God has given us and ask how can we use that for kingdom purposes. We need to tell God that we are available.

Jesus wants to feed the crowd. Even when he was tired and hungry and was trying to get to a nice quiet place to rest, Jesus still did ministry when the crowd showed up. And he will do the same thing through us. God is working in this community and your community. We need to be looking for how we can join him and participate with him.

Key Scripture: Mark 6:33-44.

General Group Question: What spiritual lesson did you learn from this story of the feeding of the 5000?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. What did Jesus do for the people after they followed him and his disciples and interrupted his desire for rest? Why did he do it?
2. As it was getting dark, what did the disciples want Jesus to tell the crowd? What was their reasoning?
3. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do for the crowd of people? Why do you think he did that?
4. What was the reaction of the disciples? How did they answer Jesus?
5. What is your typical reaction right now to a situation where there seems to be no readily available solution?
6. How did Jesus provide food for the crowd – by one miraculous event or by getting the disciples and others involved? Why do you think Jesus did it this way?
7. Is Jesus still doing ministry on the earth today? If he is, how is he doing it?
8. How would you answer the question that was asked in the sermon: Do we find ourselves **following Jesus** or do we come up with a pretty good idea for our ministries and **ask Jesus to follow us**? Briefly explain your answer.
9. What gift, ability, or resource (no matter how insignificant you may think it is) will you give to God so that he can bless it and multiply it?