



Stories
About Jesus

SERMON & SCRIPTURE DISCUSSION GUIDE



August 2, 2026 (Tenth Sunday after Pentecost): Stories About Jesus: Feeding the 5000

Text: Matthew 14:13-21 (see also Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:12-17, and John 6:1-14)

Topics: Jesus' divine authority and compassion in providing for both physical and spiritual needs

Core Values: Divine Compassion, Provision, Abundance, Social Holiness

Main Idea: Jesus' feeding of the five thousand demonstrates that minimal resources can achieve great things under divine blessing.

Application/Beginning thought... John Wesley famously stated that there is "no holiness but social holiness" to counter the idea that faith could be practiced in isolation. This miracle shows a public faith in action meeting physical needs through communal care.

Bible Study Questions:

1. How would you summarize the story and describe its main lesson or lessons?
2. What news prompted Jesus to go to a deserted place by himself?
3. How did Jesus respond when the crowds interrupted His attempt to find a solitary place? Can you draw lessons from His response to your own life?
4. How did the disciples suggest solving the problem of the hungry crowd? What was Jesus' response?
5. What do we learn from this miracle about saying grace at meals and not being wasteful with food?
6. What parallels can you draw from this story and the Last Supper? (See verse 19).

Group Discussion Questions:

1. When you look at a problem that seems overwhelming, do you find yourself saying "All I have here is..."? What are the loaves and fishes in your life?
2. How does knowing that Jesus had compassion even while grieving help you trust Him with your own needs or interruptions?
3. Why do you think Jesus insisted the disciples be the ones to feed the crowd rather than doing it alone?
4. How does this story relate to Wesley's idea of active love, which requires "loving neighbor in both word and deed"?
5. How does Jesus' ability to serve others while in personal pain challenge our understanding of Christian perfection and growing in grace?
6. What new lessons about compassion, faith, and social holiness have you learned today from this discussion? Does this story remind you of a significant mission at GBUMC? (Hint: Friday afternoon)
7. How can we pray for you?

Prayer: Gracious God, we thank you for your abundant grace. Help us to take what we have learned today and multiply it, not just for the good of our own lives, but also for the good of the community. Lead us to practice holiness through the sharing of your abundance with a hungry world. May your grace guide our steps and open our hearts to serve. In the name of Jesus Christ Amen.



Stories About Jesus

August 9, 2026 (Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost): Stories About Jesus: Jesus Walks on the Water

Text: Matthew 14:22-33 (see also Mark 6:45-52 and John 6:16-21)

Topics: God's grace in turbulent times, the necessity of keeping focus on Jesus, and the divine authority of Jesus

Core Values: Courage, Faith, Trust, Humility, Authority, Grace, Worship

Main Idea: The revelation of Jesus' divine authority as the Son of God.

Application/Beginning thought... Obedience does not exempt us from storms, but we know Jesus will be with us when our lives become turbulent.

Bible Study Questions:

1. Jesus "immediately" dismissed the crowds. What had just happened?
2. Why do you think Jesus wants to be alone?
3. Compare Matthew's account of Jesus walking on water with Mark's account (Mark 6:45-52). What are the differences? What are the similarities?
4. What was the disciples' initial reaction to seeing Jesus?
5. What did Peter do? Why do you think Matthew includes Peter's actions, but Mark doesn't?
6. What caused Peter to sink?
7. What did the disciples call Jesus after He and Peter got into the boat? Why didn't they realize this sooner?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Most scholars agree Mark and Matthew were written for different audiences. Who were they? How do the Gospels' differences in this account reflect the needs of the targeted audiences?
2. How often do we fail to recognize Jesus when we are distracted by problems?
3. What should the effect be of Jesus' words, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid" in our lives? Why is remembering these words often difficult in turbulent times.
4. If you were in the boat with the disciples, would you have stepped out like Peter?
5. Jesus calls Peter's experience a moment of doubt. Are there any areas in your life where you need to improve your trust in God?
6. Is anybody currently "stepping out of the boat"? What help do you need?
7. How can we pray for you?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, when the wind is loud and the waves are high, help us to remember your words, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Help us to keep our eyes fixed on you, rather than the storm, and thank you for reaching out to us when our faith falters. Whether we are walking to you on water or rowing to you in the boat, may we always find peace in your presence. In your name we pray. Amen.*



Stories About Jesus

August 16, 2026 (Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost): Stories About Jesus: The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

Text: Matthew 15:21-28 (see also Mark 7:24-30)

Topics: The transformative power of humble faith, the inclusivity of God's grace, and the nature of true discipleship.

Core Values: Faith, Perseverance, Trust, Humility, Inclusivity, Discipleship, Grace

Main Idea: True faith involves persevering in prayer and approaching God with humility and unwavering trust, even when faced with obstacles or delays.

Application/Beginning thought... The Canaanite woman trusted that even a "crumb" of Jesus' power was sufficient to heal her daughter, acknowledging that His mercy extended beyond Israel.

Bible Study Questions:

1. Who were the Canaanites? Why is it significant that the woman was a Canaanite?
2. What did the Canaanite woman call Jesus? Why is this important?
3. Why didn't Jesus send the Canaanite woman away like the disciples asked?
4. If you were the Canaanite woman, how would you feel after hearing Jesus say, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs"? Who are the children? Who are the dogs? What is the food?
5. How did the Canaanite woman demonstrate her faith? Could you have been bold enough to do the same?
6. How did Jesus characterize the Canaanite woman's faith? What did she do to earn that description?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. The Gospel of Mark also includes this story (Mark 7:24-30) but the woman is identified as a Gentile, not a Canaanite, and simply comes and bows at his feet to get His attention instead of directly addressing Him as "Lord, Son of David." Remember that Matthew's Gospel was written for a Jewish audience. Given the historical hostility between Jews and Canaanites, what are the points Matthew is making by adding these details to the story?
2. Contrast the attitude of the disciples with the mercy of Jesus and the trust of a Canaanite. What does this tell us about the nature of true discipleship?
3. What does this story tell us of the inclusivity of God's grace?
4. In the original text, the Greek word used for dog is *kunarion*, meaning "small dog" or "pet dog" instead of *kuon*, which could refer to unspiritual people as well as a wild dog. How might knowing this affect your understanding of the interaction between Jesus and the Canaanite woman?
5. The Canaanite woman refused to let pride or offense dictate her reaction to Jesus. How can we cultivate that same level of humility and guard against defensive pride in our daily lives?
6. Methodism emphasizes that saving faith naturally expresses itself in action. In what ways did the Canaanite woman put her faith into action?
7. How can we pray for you?

Prayer: Lord God, your Mercy knows no boundaries. We come to you like the Canaanite woman, acknowledging our deep need for your grace. Forgive us for the times our pride keeps us from crying out to you. Give us the same relentless perseverance, deep humility, and limitless trust that even the smallest crumbs of Your power can change our lives, our families, and our communities. Break our hearts for those on the margins and help us welcome the outsider just as Christ welcomed the Canaanite women. In the name of Jesus, Amen.