



SERMON RECAP

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

Changemaking begins with compassion

Series: The Change Makers

Scripture: Mark 6:30-44 and Luke 10:25-37

Whose suffering matters? This is a question that people do not tend to ask, but I might argue that it is the question that matters most in our current situation.

The easy answer is “every one’s suffering matters,” and while it is true, it is also dishonest. Humans do not have the capacity to allow all suffering to matter. In our human frailty, suffering of our neighbor matters more than the suffering of a stranger. It is a fact of our humanity that suffering of our neighbor matters more than the suffering of someone across the world.

When the legal expert asked “And who is my neighbor?” he was getting to the heart of Jesus’ ministry. He was asking Jesus, “whose suffering matters?” That’s why Jesus told a story about suffering. For the first two people in the story, the suffering did not matter. For the last person, it did. In this moment, Jesus was re-defining who a neighbor is, because no one listening would have considered the Samaritan a neighbor. Being a neighbor to someone means that their suffering matters.

Whose suffering matters? It is not a comfortable question, but it is the question that has torn us apart as a country in the last week. After the horrific death of Charlie Kirk, people have been enraged by the answer to this question. People are enraged by other people’s response to the suffering that we all witnessed. When suffering leads to rage, nothing changes. People just feed into the cycle of rage, division, and anger. When suffering leads to compassion, this can lead to change.

In the course of human history, suffering of people has only ended when someone noticed it and decided that it matters. When we look at suffering, we may be moved by compassion, and compassion is the first step toward alleviating the suffering. Compassion is the first step to making change. When presented with suffering, we can look away, place blame, or have compassion.

Suffering makes us uncomfortable. We don’t like to look at suffering. But people love to look at rage. We love to look at righteous anger. We love to win, prove them wrong, and place blame. This is what we have seen happen this week. Suffering makes us

uncomfortable, but the blame game moved forward. People refused to **both** see the suffering that Kirk caused **and** the suffering that people felt at his death. Everyone gave the wrong answer to “Whose suffering matters?” and the response was rage. Rage gains clicks. Rage gains eyes. Rage earns advertising money. Rage fuels the need to “win.” Looking at suffering makes us turn away, but Jesus demands that we not turn away from the suffering.

Our second story is a foundational story in the life of Jesus. The feeding of the 5,000 is a story of suffering. Jesus saw people who were suffering. In fact, he was suffering. The story comes immediately after learning of the brutal execution of John the Baptist. During a banquet at King Herod’s palace, Herod was manipulated into the brutal execution of John. It is a gruesome story.

Immediately afterwards, we read about Jesus inadvertently gathering a crowd of followers. He was trying to be by himself, perhaps to process his own grief after the murder of his cousin and friend. When he couldn’t get away, he was moved with compassion and taught the people about the Kingdom. Then he showed them what the Kingdom was about by making sure everyone had enough to eat.

In that moment, he had 5,000 men. He had enough to form a Legion. He had enough to go to Herod, the one who killed his friend, and demand retribution. He had enough to make the kind of change that many had been begging for. When the disciples asked him what they should do, he didn’t say “give them something to be angry about,” he didn’t say “give them marching orders,” he didn’t say, “give them a sword to wield.” He said, “give them something to eat.”

Jesus saw their suffering, and he was moved with compassion. In the midst of his own suffering, he did not feed the rage. Instead, he gave them something to eat.

And now, Jesus gives us something to eat. We gather to worship with Christ’s Table in front of us. It is set with bread and grape juice. It is with the bread of community and the cup of forgiveness. When Jesus saw the suffering of the world, he was moved with compassion. When he faced the inevitability of his own suffering, he was driven by courage to break bread and forgive. Jesus has compassion on your suffering.

If your understanding of Jesus is moving you to rage right now, I beg you to listen again to the one who chose to give them something to eat. I beg you to listen to the story that expands our idea of whose suffering matters.