

Encountering the Word

with Jeff Cavins

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Isaiah 55:1-3 • Romans 8:35, 37-39 • Matthew 14:13-21



The Grieving Heart of Christ

The Gospel this week begins with a quiet ache. Jesus has just received news of the death of John the Baptist. John was not only a prophet but also a cousin, a friend, and the one who prepared the way for his ministry. Jesus withdraws to a deserted place, seeking solitude, space to grieve, and time with the Father.

But the crowds follow him.

What happens next reveals the heart of Christ. Instead of turning inward or protecting his own pain, Jesus allows compassion to move him outward. He sees the people. He heals the sick. He feeds the hungry. Even in sorrow, he chooses love.

This moment is deeply human and deeply divine. Jesus does not deny his grief, but he does not let it close his heart. His suffering becomes the place from which mercy flows. In this way, the miracle of the loaves is not only about food, but about a love that refuses to turn away.

St. Paul reminds us in Romans that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, not hardship, not distress, not suffering. Jesus proves this truth by loving others even when his own heart is heavy. His compassion is not dependent on perfect circumstances. It flows from who he is.



Living the Gospel

Choose one intentional act of compassion this week, especially when it feels inconvenient. This could be checking in on someone, offering help without being asked, or simply listening without rushing to fix. Let your own wounds become places where grace can flow outward. Like Jesus, allow love to have the final word, even in moments of exhaustion or sorrow.

Ponder and Pray

» How do you usually respond when you are tired, overwhelmed, or grieving? Do you allow pain to soften your heart or to close it?

» Where might Jesus be inviting you to love others even while carrying your own burdens?

» How does knowing that Christ understands grief change the way you bring your struggles to him? Ask the Lord this week to show you how he is present in your pain and how he may want to love others through you.

Make It Your Own

You and others in your household may use this space to write anything about today's Mass. It might be your view of Jeff Cavins's reflection, your priest's homily, or your answers to the questions on this page—anything to help you and your household get the most of today's Mass.

“ **When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them.** ”

—Matthew 14:14

Jeff Cavins is the author of *The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation* and the creator of the video series *Sundays with Ascension*, from which this reflection was adapted.

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