

You Feed Them:
August 2, 2026

There once was a young girl... [1 Kisa Gotami]
In Northern India...
Her name was Gotamī...

She was called Kisā Gotamī...
By her family,
Because she was so thin...
And Kisa means skinny.

Her family was very poor...
And fortune favored her...
With a wealthy husband.

After many years...
She gave birth to a child...
She had a beautiful baby boy.

When he was only three...
Disease swept through...
That region of India.

And tragically...
The boy became ill...
And eventually he died.

Kisā Gotamī was inconsolable...
So much so...
That she would not let anyone...
Hold a funeral or perform last rites.
Or anything like that.

She insisted physicians and healers...
Be brought to her...
To bring her son back to life...
But none were able to do so.

Finally, someone suggested...
She go and see the Buddha...
At the monastery...
Who was supposed to be...
A great healer and teacher.

She took her son's body...
And laid him at the feet of the Buddha...
Pleading with him...
To give her back her precious son.

The Buddha told her...
He would be happy to do so...
If she would only bring him...

A pinch of mustard seeds...
From the house of a family...
Who has known no loss...
Who has felt no grief.

The woman agreed... and left her son...
In the Buddha's gentle care...
And went door to door...
Asking each family...
If they have experienced loss...

When she arrived...
And asked for the mustard seeds...
The people gave them...
With no hesitation.

But when she asked about loss...
Every family shared...
Their own story with her...
Because every family...
Had grief to share.

She listened to them.
And cried with them.
And slowly... the more she visited...
She began to understand.

By the time she reached...
The end of the village...
Though she had not found...
A single family who was spared...
The pain of loss...

Kisā Gotamī found within herself...
That she was not alone in her grief.

She found...
The ability to begin accepting...
The death of her son...
And to take the first steps...
On the path to healing.

Grief is a very strange... **[2 Grief]**
And personal thing.
Everyone grieves in their own way...
And every circumstance is different.

As a pastor... for the past 33 years...
I have seen my share of death and grief.

I have held people's hands...
When they take their last breath.

I have tried to be present...
In those moments of loss...
And even though...I know there are no words...
That will make everything ok...

I say some words...
Of the hope we have in Christ.

But still. It affects me too.

Some people die too soon...
And it breaks my heart.

Some people fight courageous...
Drawn out battles...
With prolonged illness.

And by the time they lay down...
The mantle of this life...
It's ok for them to rest.

Some people live good full lives...
And close their eyes...
And peacefully go to sleep.

But each time...
Someone we love dies...
We have to react... respond...
And figure out our own life.

Elizabeth Kubler Ross... **[3 Five Stages]**
Was the Swiss and American Psychiatrist...
Who developed the Kubler Ross model...
Of the stages of grief...

And I know you've heard this before...
Denial.
Anger.
Bargaining.
Depression.
And acceptance.

But those stages aren't linear.
We can go through them... in any order.
We can go through them... multiple times...
We can skip one stage...
And go on to another.

We can feel like we have reached acceptance...
Only to have grief reach out...
Smack us upside our heads...
And we have to start all over again.
For that particular day.

How we react to death and loss...
Is unique to each person.
There are no rules.

And so... when someone is grieving...
We should let them be...
Let them grieve the way they need to grieve.

And just be available.

But this morning... **[4 Solitude]**
I want to talk about one way...
People sometimes react.
Solitude.

Ruth Haley Barton... a Christian author and teacher...
Wrote a book called "Sacred Rhythms".

And in the book... she wrote:

Solitude is an opportunity...
To interrupt this cycle...
By turning off the noise...
And stimulation of our lives...

So that we can hear our loneliness...
And our longing...
Calling us deeper...
Into the only relationship...
That can satisfy our longing.

That seemed significant to me...
Since this gospel lesson begins... **[5 John and Jesus]**
With Jesus mourning...
The sudden death...
Of John the Baptist.

His friend.
His cousin.
His messenger...
The One who had...
Prepared the way...
For Jesus' ministry.

Remember.
John saw Jesus walking...
Near where he was baptizing...
And said... to the crowd...

Behold the Lamb of God...
Who takes away the sin...
Of the world.

John knew who Jesus was.

Can you imagine...
What a relief that was...
To Jesus?

Can you imagine how he felt...
Knowing that at least one person...
Really understood who he was.

He spent most of his time...
Trying to explain to the people...
Who he was...
And what he was doing.

But not to John.
He was literally...
A Godsend...
To Jesus.

Like a drink of cold water...
In the desert.

Like a little bit of light...
In complete darkness.

Like a friend.
Who knew him...
And loved him.
And you know what...
Jesus loved John too.

Jesus said...
There has never been...
And never will be...
A man greater than...
John the Baptist.

Now can you feel the weight of this moment???
Can you feel the SORROW...
On Jesus' heart.

Can you understand... **[6 Lonely Place]**
Why Jesus wanted to get away.
Why he needed some solitude...
Why he had to talk to God...
To try... to satisfy...
The deepest longing of his own heart...

Because Jesus knew...
Only God had the power of life and death.
Only God could give him hope... in his sorrow.
Only God could give him answers.

So he went to seek...
His God and Father.

He tried... anyway.
He got into a boat.
Went to a deserted place.
By himself.
To be alone.

But something happened.
As it often does. **[7 The People]**
People happened.

You know...
I've heard pastors joke...
Ministry would be easy...
If it weren't for the people.
Jesus didn't feel that way.

That's the whole point right?
We are the whole point.

We are the reason Jesus came...
Into this world.

We are the reason he endured...
So much suffering and pain.

We are the reason...
That the disciples...
Captured the words...
And the life of Jesus...

And made sure... that we...
All the generations that followed...
Would continue to know him...
And to learn from him.

People are the reason.

So when Jesus sought solitude...
They followed him...

When he tried to get away.
They followed him...
To a desolate place...
On the other side of the lake.

They came from their towns...
And villages...
And made their way...
Around the lake...
To a place...

That had nothing.
No water.
No food.
No shelter.
Nothing.

It was the wilderness...

And when Jesus saw...
What lengths they went to...
To be near him.
To hear his words.
To feel his touch.
To be set free.

He put his own grief on hold.
And did the work...
That God put in front of him.

Actually... the gospel lesson says... **[8 Compassion]**
He had compassion on them.

And in this context...
The word passion means... to suffer...
The word com means... with.
He suffered with them.

Actually earlier in the gospel of Matthew... chapter 9...
It said that Jesus had compassion on the people...
Because they were harassed and helpless...
Like sheep without a shepherd.

So because he had a compassionate heart...
He couldn't just watch.
He couldn't just keep grieving.
He couldn't put them on hold.

He had to get involved...
He had to give his life...
For them.
Yes?

So. Remember when I said...
They were in a desolate location.
No food. No water. No shelter.

Well. Everything was fine and good.
Until it got late... around 6 pm.
You know... supper time.

And suddenly the disciples realized...
We can't feed all these people.
We need to do something.

So like whiny little babies...
They went to Jesus and said...
You need to get rid of them.
Send the crowds away.
So they can get what they need...
In the towns and the villages.

Jesus looked at those disciples... and said...
They don't need to go away.
You feed them.

Now listen...
I don't want to talk about the miracle.
You know... whole bunch of bread and fish...
And enough leftovers for a month.

Today...
I want to focus on the disciples...
And their bad attitude.
And Jesus' response.

See. I think what they were really saying...
Is that all these people...
Who gathered here...

Well... honestly... **[9 Go Away]**
It's not my problem Jesus.
Enough is enough.
We're done. We're tired.
We're sick of people.
Send them away.

Not my problem.
But what if Jesus makes it your problem.
And not it... as in... makes it your problem.
Them. These people.

What if Jesus says...
You are here... to do what I do.
You are here... to serve their needs.
You are here... to give your life away.

So... figure it out disciples.
Get to work.
Do your job.
Give your life.

Because that's what it means...
To be my disciple.

See... the problem was...
The disciples forgot...
That people are the ministry.

People are the goal.
People are reason.
So instead... they were...
Dehumanizing them...
Looking at people...
Like they weren't people.

Like they are objects.
To be moved...
From here to there...

Like they were problems.

I feel like this sermon has been...
Kind of heavy today... so far...
I need a break.
Watch this.

[Video - Close to You]... [10 Do Not Stop]

A great and awkward scene...
From the 1989 movie...
Parenthood.

But besides... getting a break...
From the seriousness of this sermon...
It makes sense for us...

To remember why the people came...
To that desolate place... in the first place.
They came to meet Jesus.
They came to hear his words.
They came to be healed by him.
They came to be close to him.

And Jesus had some things to say...
About being a hinderance...
To people who desire...
To be close to him.

He said... don't do it.
Don't stop them.

Remember when the children...
Were gathering around him...
And the disciples tried...
To get rid of them too.

Jesus said...
Don't you stop them.
To such as these...
Belong the Kingdom of Heaven.

And it would be better for the person...
Who tries to keep one of these little ones... from me...
To have a millstone hung around their neck...
And be thrown into the sea.

Ok. This is a priority for Jesus.
Don't stop people...
From coming to him.
Don't send people...
Away who seek him.

Don't be the one...
Who gets between...
Jesus and his people.

So. That's it for today.
It's really a pretty simple idea.

Jesus had compassion on the people...
And gave his life...
For them.

Jesus expected his disciples...
To have compassion for people...
And give their lives...
For them too.

And guess where this is going...

Jesus expects us...
The disciples of today....
To have compassion on all people...
And to give our lives...
For them.

That's it. **[11 You Feed Them]**
That is your calling.
That is my calling.

Don't stop them.
Don't get between Jesus... and his people.
They don't have to go away.
You feed them.

Thanks be to God.
Amen!