

Rocky Mountain Synod Video Stories

Bible Study #2

Bread in the City

Opening Prayer

(From "Praying with Dorothy Day")

Merciful God, you feed the hungry and rescue those in trouble. Empower us to be the hands and heart of your mercy in our world. Amen

Luther's Small Catechism

"Give us today our daily bread."

"What is this?"

In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

"What then does 'daily bread' mean?"

Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

– Martin Luther, *The Fourth Petition of The Lord's Prayer, Small Catechism*

Fifth Commandment

"You shall not murder"

"What does this mean?"

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs.

– Martin Luther, *The Meaning of the Fifth Commandment, Small Catechism*

Show Video

"Bread in the City"

Bible Study and Discussion

The Mission statement of the Urban Servant Corps (USC) is summed up in its logo: "Serving Christ through action for better community." The foundational principals of the USC are **Service**, **Intentional Christian Community**, **Simplicity**, and **Justice**. Full time volunteers at USC struggle to live into these principals every day. We are all called as followers of Jesus to struggle to live into these principals ourselves.



In the Large Catechism Luther reminds us "that this commandment is violated not only when a person actually does evil, but also when he fails to do good to his neighbor, or, though he has the opportunity, fails to prevent, protect, and save him from suffering bodily harm or injury." (LC, 189-190)

- How might we pray and live as a people mindful of the interconnectedness of every gift given to us by God?

Read Micah 6:6-8

(What does the Lord require of you?)

Justine Zollo of The Gathering Place, a shelter for women in need of assistance, says that the USC volunteers go beyond simply doing the job they are assigned to do; they "walk in the shoes of the poor" and "are on a personal and spiritual journey. They come up against their own biases and assumptions about who we serve and how the world works."

- How might we dare to examine our ideas of people who are in need?

Read Hebrews 13:1-3

(Showing hospitality to strangers)

USC volunteers, mostly recent college graduates, come to this year of service for a variety of reasons. Unequivocally they discover that this year is "transformational in a very radical way," according to, Krista Ullestad, the USC executive director. This transformation comes not only in

the service they do, but also in the challenge of bringing out the best of each other in community life.

- *How can we, as communities united by Christ's love and challenge, do more together than we can do as individuals?*

Volunteers Kayla Johnson and Lindsey Lowern share the experience they have had with people they serve. Lindsey says, "It's not just the guys who are holding a sign on the side of the road – it's your neighbors, people who you maybe never had guessed..."

- *How could our own congregation or faith community enter into service to people who are in need beyond sending a check? Where are the angels we do not know?*

Henri Nouwen, a Roman Catholic Priest and author states: "How is it possible to keep caring for the poor when the poor only get poorer? How is it possible to keep nursing the sick when they are not getting better? How can I keep consoling the dying when their deaths only bring me more grief? The answer is that they all hold a blessing for me, a blessing that I need to receive. Ministry is, first of all, receiving God's blessing from those to whom we minister."

- *What about our congregation? How can we see ministry among those who are poor as a blessing to us?*

Read Matthew 25: 31-46

(The works of mercy)

In the video, we hear many of the volunteers talk about the complexity of the problems faced by the people that they work with. Often our culture and media oversimplify social problems, removing them from our concern.

By walking with those who are marginalized we recognize that each and every person has a unique story. In recognizing this we recognize our own poverty.

- *How might we dare to consider social issues beyond what we see in the media?*

Krista Monson, a current volunteer, talks about her USC experiences of diversity as being very far beyond her experience growing up in rural Minnesota. But she states, "...because I grew up in a church that definitely approached and encompassed compassion to all, I was able to make that step a lot more smoothly than even I realized was possible for myself."

- *How are we exposing our children to lives of compassion, love, and works of mercy, as well as diversity?*

Dorothy Day was one of the founders of the "Catholic Worker Movement." She began her work during the Depression among people who were poor in New York City. She asserts, "It is no use saying that we are born two thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Nor will those who live at the end of the world have been born too late. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts. But now it is with the voice of our contemporaries that he speaks, with the eyes of store clerks, factory workers, and children that he gazes; with the hands of office workers, slum dwellers, and suburban housewives that he walks, and with the heart of anyone in need that he longs for shelter. And giving shelter or food to anyone who asks for it, or needs it, is giving it to Christ."

- *How are we the hands, voice, and feet of Christ in our neighborhoods? How are we seeing Christ's hands, voice and feet in those around us?*

Closing Prayer

Read Psalm 41:1-3

Join in prayer together:

Holy, loving and living God, thank you for all of the blessings of our lives. Help us to recognize our dependence on you, to live lives of gratitude, and to dare to look at the world around us as a challenge in our next step of faith. Open our ears to your words of love and your call to serve. Show us how to embrace all of your challenges as gifts from you. Lead us to walk with those whose name we don't know, whose stories need to be heard, whose lives are intricately connected to ours. Thank you for never giving up on us! Let us never give up on each other. Amen.

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The Urban Servant Corps seeks to fulfill Christ's mission of love demonstrated through action by working for peace with justice, advocating for and with oppressed person, and sharing our power and abundance with those most in need. Visit www.urbanservantcorps.org to learn more about Urban Servant Corps.