



Weeks 4-6

WALKING  
WITH  
JESUS

Notes for the Road  
Fall 2017



# WEEK FOUR

*walking to serve*

## To Ask Yourself...

- On your walk, have you ever felt “too tired to care”? What led you to feel that way?
- What is compassion? What does it feel like? What does it look like in action?
- Have you ever had a goal or a task to complete, and *absolutely no idea* how you were going to get it done? What did you do? How did it work out—or not?
- What does it mean to say that God works *through* people? What does this look, sound, and feel like?

## FEATURED READING:

### *Matthew 14:13-21*

*Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ Jesus said to them, ‘They need not go away; you give them something to eat.’ They replied, ‘We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.’ And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

## Jesus on the Road

At the beginning of this story, Jesus has just heard about John the Baptist’s execution at the hands of Herod (Matthew 14:1-12). By withdrawing “to a deserted place” far from the crowds and even his closest followers, Jesus was likely seeking space to grieve his forerunner and friend. He may have seen John’s violent fate as foreshadowing his own and needed time to cope with his own uncertainty and fear. His exact thoughts and feelings are not explicit in the text, but this much is clear: this is a deeply human, vulnerable moment in the life of Jesus.

Despite the weariness and sadness Jesus felt, he had “compassion” for the crowd once they arrived. Compassion is a buzzword worth unpacking; it comes from the Latin *compassio*, “to suffer with.” The compassionate Christ suffers with others.

When Jesus’ disciples wanted to dismiss the crowd for dinner, he was insistent not only that the crowd should stay, but that the *disciples* should feed them. Jesus placed the responsibility to serve others squarely on his disciples’ shoulders.

The miracle in this text could be described as “collaborative” or “participatory,” Jesus commands the people and blesses the meal, the disciples serve, the people eat and return their leftovers. God works through a broad group of people to make good on a kingdom promise- that the hungry will be filled (Luke 6:21).

# Sermon - "What we can't Ignore" - October 1

**We're called to serve— to walk toward others.**

But often our own needs and those of others seem to be at odds. How do we serve well?

**Our lives and ministries, in the pattern of Jesus' own, can become exhausting, and even depleting sometimes.**

**We need to have rest and restoration**, but often we wait to "take a break" until we're at our "breaking point."

And then **the world is always drawing us back** before we're ready.

What's broken cries out for healing—it's a cry we can't ignore.

We feel compelled, again and again, to lay aside our needs for others'—in other words, to serve.

**Does service entail complete self-denial?**

Is that what God requires?

How can it possibly be life-giving, sustainable, or healthy?

**Notice the mechanics of miracle-work:**

Who blesses?

Who sacrifices?

Who shares?

Who receives?

Who gathers the leftovers?

The miracle offers a model for service: humble, responsible, participatory, and collaborative.

**We are able to serve God's purposes because**

**God's power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).**

**In Christ, each one of us has the capacity to become a "wounded healer," in the words of Henri Nouwen. We are equipped to serve by what we have suffered.**

And that goes for the Church—the body of Christ—as well, both here and around the world.

"Don't mind if I fall apart; there's more room in a broken heart."

— Carly Simon

## Your Walk ....

- Can you think of a time in your life that God sent an incredibly big interruption? Did it call for compassion? Did it call for sacrifice? What did it teach you?
- When Jesus was weary, he took a break. In your walk, how are you taking time to rest, pray, and reconnect with God? What can hold you back from doing so?
- Have you ever used your own “wounded-ness”—that is, your past experience of pain or grief—to serve someone else? What did you do? What was it like?
- Where might God be calling you to take responsibility for a need?
- Where might God be calling you to serve someone else?
- Where might God be calling you to collaborate with others toward kingdom purposes?
- How have you been equipped by God for service?

## On the Road with WHPC....

- What are our church’s “wounds”? How might they be transformed into healing?
- How could this encounter with Jesus shape our church’s missional involvement with its broader community?
- How do you envision God working through WHPC to serve “the least of these”?
- How can we be sure to serve *God’s* mission—rather than simply our own?

# My Walk with Jesus—Dave Barstow



I've often said that Bono wrecked my life. During the 2006 Leadership Summit, the rock-star-turned-activist said that he couldn't understand why Christians had taken so long to respond to the AIDS crisis in Africa. I felt like he was talking directly to me. I had been to Africa several times, for both business and tourism, and I knew intellectually about the devastating effects of AIDS, but I had done absolutely nothing. That moment changed my life, for both good and bad.

Feeling guilty, I resolved to do something, but I had no idea what. By profession, I'm a computer scientist. What could a computer guy do about AIDS? That question was answered a year later at a pastor-training workshop in eastern Zambia. The workshop dealt with the stigma of HIV and AIDS, which often keeps people from getting tested and treated, because they are worried about what the neighbors will think. Especially in Africa, pastors have great influence over their members and their communities. In the context of AIDS, that influence can be judgmental and negative or it can be compassionate and positive. At that workshop, I realized that I could help move pastors away from judgment and toward compassion. With help from many people, as well as WHPC, I've spent much of the last ten years trying to do that.

This work has often taken me far outside my comfort zone. I remember being in a church in Soweto, South Africa, about to give a greeting to the congregation, thinking to myself, "What on earth am I doing here?" I thought the same thing while talking with the warden of a prison in Zimbabwe about a beekeeping project. And when I talked with a group of sex workers at an AIDS conference, knowing that it was much more important for me to listen than to talk.

But I have also been surprised by moments that were quite spiritual. I remember walking from a small motel to an Internet café in central Zambia. As a white guy, I felt totally out of place, but I also had an overwhelming feeling that I was exactly where God wanted me to be. Or when I was asked to lead the final prayer at a workshop in Zimbabwe. I'm not very good at praying, especially compared to the pastors we were training, but suddenly the words started flowing and they kept on flowing.

By now I've come to believe that what I heard from Bono was a true calling. I'm usually skeptical about things like this, but I keep remembering something that my friend John Doty once said, "Faith is believing in something enough to act as if it's true." There's a lot of wisdom in those words, but they also sometimes make life decisions a little more complicated. When my wife Linda and I talk about plans, there's always a third voice in the room. But we've learned to live with the complexity, and our lives have been blessed in ways that we never could have imagined before Bono made his life-wrecking comment about Christians and AIDS.

And by the way, Bono's words are as relevant in 2017 as they were in 2006. The AIDS crisis isn't over. In fact, there's a real risk that AIDS will come back worse than ever. We need many strong prophetic Christian voices to demand that the world fulfill its commitment to end AIDS.

But even if it's not about AIDS, I'd encourage all of you to listen for a call and to act when you hear it. It might wreck your life, but it will also bring unexpected rewards. And it will bring us all closer to the goal that Jesus told us to pray for: "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

# WEEK FIVE

*walking with compassion*

## To Ask Yourself...

- Do you consider yourself more about relationships or tasks? How does that play out in your daily life?
- Do you know someone who is deeply compassionate? What is it like to be in their presence?
- How do you handle interruptions when you are in the middle of something important or urgent?
- Have you ever had the experience of an “interruption” becoming the main thing? How did that happen?
- Do you think God interrupts you at times? What does that look like?

## FEATURED READING: Luke 8:40-56

*Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. Just then there came a man named Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. As he went, the crowds pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, 'Who touched me?' When all denied it, Peter said, 'Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you.' But Jesus said, 'Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me.' When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.' While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer.' When Jesus heard this, he replied, 'Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved.' When he came to the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. They were all weeping and wailing for her; but he said, 'Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and called out, 'Child, get up!' Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astounded; but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.*

## Jesus on the Road

As Jesus walks he encounters broken, hurting people. First Jairus interrupts his walk, desperate for help for his ill daughter. Jesus takes a detour to help Jairus, but gets interrupted again by an ill woman. These two stories have stayed intricately connected—interwoven in Mark, Matthew and Luke. There are a number of interesting connections:

Notice the recurring number 12 that links these two.

Notice that Jesus touches them both, and that healing and power come from Jesus' touch.

Notice that in both cases, there is a “secret” or “hiddenness” to the power of Jesus that only faith can understand and access.

Jesus makes a distinction here between being present (the crowd, the mourners) and having faith. Jesus calls for the ill woman and for Jairus to put their full trust in what they cannot see—to have faith in his power. The ill woman is called to make a public testimony of her healing and of Jesus' power. Jairus is called to keep his daughter's resurrection a secret. While death isn't beyond the power of God is it something that only faith can comprehend? Fear plays a part in these stories. The woman is afraid to be known in public. Jairus is afraid of death for his daughter. Jesus offers peace, hope, salvation and life instead of fear.

Jairus and the woman both fall at Jesus' feet. They interrupt his walk, falling at the feet of compassion and Jesus pauses in the midst of an urgent mission to help.

# Sermon - "We Now Interrupt this Walk..." - October 8

**My Walking Story**—Interruptions on the trail.  
How the world deals with interruptions.

How Jesus dealt with interruptions—Jairus  
and Woman

**Compassion trumps other agendas for Jesus**  
What that looks like in our lives? In the church?



**Faith trumps other agendas for Jesus—Jesus calls us to similar faith.**  
Faith of Jairus and of the ill woman

Our call to faith –be prepared for interruption

Interrupted by brokenness

Interrupted by strenuous calls for trust

Interrupted by moments to testify to God's power

Interrupted by moments to celebrate new life

*C. S. Lewis advised, "The great thing, if one can, is to stop regarding all the unpleasant things as interruptions of one's own or real life. The truth is of course that what one calls the interruptions are precisely one's real life – the life God is sending day by day."*

## **James 1:17-27**

Being Doers of the Word of God—what that looks like in our lives

Being Doers of the Word of God—What that looks like for our church

*"In compassion , when we feel with the other, we dethrone ourselves from the center of our world and we put another person there."*

Karen Armstrong

## Your Walk ....

- Can you think of a time in your life that God send an incredibly big interruption? Did it call for compassion? Did it call for sacrifice? What did it teach you?
- What brokenness is stopping you in your tracks today? What might God be calling for you to do?
- Where has faith called you to stretch and to believe in that which cannot be seen?
- Do you ever worry that there is not enough of compassion in your heart for what's needed? That there is not enough faith? That there is not enough of Jesus' healing power for what you are facing?
- What steps can/do you take to make compassion a priority as you go through your daily life?
- Do you think compassion is taught? What connection does compassion have with faith?

## On the Road with WHPC....

- As a church, are we easily interrupted by God? Do we respond quickly to brokenness and to need?
- Does our congregation emphasize the healing power of Jesus Christ? In what ways? How does that look?
- What audacious claim of faith is WHPC called to make in this season?

# My Walk with Jesus—Claire Berry



When I first moved to rural New Mexico in 2009, I had no real idea of what to expect. I had arrived there on a bit of a whim. Applying to Teach for America had not been a whim—I believed passionately in the organization’s mission to educate and empower young people from low-income communities—but teaching *in New Mexico*, in Diné (Navajo) country, was a leap into the unknown for me.

And those unknowns kept multiplying. I had been prepared through a summer training intensive to teach pre-Kindergarten—but right before school started, I was placed in a high school special education role. I had made a close friend during training—but our assigned schools were a full two hours apart. I found myself all alone in a *very* small town, technically a “census-designated place,” made up of three public schools, two trailer parks, two gas stations, a mom-and-pop grocery, and a Family Dollar. I had only ever lived in cities. Had I moved to another state, or to another planet?

Over the summer, our trainers had warned my fellow TFA corps members and I, that as new teachers, we were going to find ourselves failing constantly, over and over, as we tried to meet the needs of our students and their families. This prophecy quickly came true; every time I thought I knew how to meet a challenge, I would find myself flummoxed by five more. When I realized that my ninth graders were misbehaving in their Language Arts class because they could not follow the course content, I decided to give them a standard diagnostic test. They all finished in mere minutes, having guessed randomly through an entire test of questions they could not read. I was no closer to understanding or helping them. I noticed that another student was dozing off in our one-on-one science tutorials. He wasn’t eating breakfast at home, so I started bringing granola bars, which he enjoyed. But his drowsiness continued—because, as I came to understand, he was self-medicating grief over the death of his father, as well as an emerging mental illness, using marijuana and other drugs. Over time, he stopped coming to school, and no one knew where he was living. And there was nothing I could do. For the perfectionist in me, that was completely maddening. It felt like making a difference was impossible.

But it was during this time—in my early twenties, living in the middle of nowhere, and pushing the little weight of my life against seemingly insurmountable odds—that I first understood what it meant to love other people. It started as a prayer I would whisper to myself when I woke up in the morning: “If nothing else, let me love them today.” Love could get me out of bed. And love could guide me amidst the many questions, interruptions, challenges, and inevitable failures I encountered every day. Love was careful comments on barely readable personal essays. Love was listening to the “long story” of a student or parent. Love was foolish. Love was disorganized. Love was inefficient—a kind of art. It was beautiful.

Looking back on that time in my life, I see many things I wish I’d done differently or better. But I can also see myself, sometimes, by the grace of God, surrendering myself and my own definitions of success to move at *love’s* direction.

To move at love’s direction, rather than my own, is to go nowhere fast. I go slow, I stumble, and I might even go in curly-cues sometimes. I am still learning to walk this circuitous, patient walk of love, which is, in essence, a closer walk with Jesus and a humbler walk with God. In the wilderness of this world, it’s really the only way to go.

# WEEK SIX

*walking with joy*

## To Ask Yourself...

- Describe the most joyful person you know. What seems to be the source of their joy?
- Have you ever been in a situation where people experienced joy in the midst of pain or sorrow? What was that like?
- What puts a “spring” in your step?
- Have you ever failed to see something good or holy or healing that was right in front of you? What kept you “blind” in that situation?
- When is joy difficult to find or experience?

## FEATURED READING: *Luke 18:35-43*

*As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth\* is passing by.’ Then he shouted, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ He said, ‘Lord, let me see again.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.’ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.*

## Jesus on the Road

This story of Jesus on the road provides the model for “making a disciple.” The blind man cries out for mercy and is brought to Jesus by others. He receives healing and gains the eyes of faith that see his life and his relationship to God in a fresh way. Then his discipleship begins as he praises God and walks with Jesus.

Notice that Jesus asks the blind man about his desire. His desire isn’t for charity or comfort, but for healing.

Jesus clearly states that faith brings healing or salvation. They are interchangeable in this story.

This healing gives rise to the metaphor of spiritual insight. While the blind man receives physical sight, Jesus also gives spiritual sight. Our eyes can be opened to the power and mercy of God unrecognized before. In such cases we also respond with praise and with deeper commitment to Jesus.

The blind man prays the perfect prayer—Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. It’s the same prayer prayed by the justified tax collector in Luke 18:9-14.

Notice that some try to keep the blind man from Jesus. They try to shut him up. Jesus instead instructs the crowd to bring the blind man, just as Jesus instructed for little children to be brought to him in Luke 18:16.

The blind man joins the ranks of those who have found salvation through a bold and persistent faith that demands attention and ignores social barriers.

This is truly a story of persistence— persistence in calling out to Jesus and persistence in praise.

# Sermon - "A Spring in Your Step"- October 15

**My walking story**—surprised by joy!

## **Jesus and the blind man meet on the road.**

Moment of crying out—like our human cries  
Moment of eyes opened—like our moments  
Moment of worship—pure praise—walking in joy



*The blind man's stubborn insistence to keep on crying out to Jesus is what makes me love this little man so much. I believe it's why Jesus also seems to have been delighted by him as well. He sits there in his own personal darkness, crying out for a gift he knows he does not deserve. He cried out for mercy. It is the perfect prayer... the simplest request for what is most critical. It asks from God what is most essential. It is a plaintive cry for a piece of God's own heart. It is a prayer that Christians have whispered for centuries. -Michael Card*

## **What makes us blind?**

We think it's about us when it's about Jesus  
We think we know what's really going on  
We think we know what we need  
We think we can manufacture joy  
**Such blindness steals our joy!**

## **Blindness and joy—Power of God to open eyes**

Isaiah 35:1-7a

Psalm 100:1-5

## **Walking with Jesus**

Walking with our eyes opened to grace

Walking in worship

Walking in joy

*"Joy is the best makeup."*

Anne Lamott

## Your Walk ....

- If Jesus were to ask what you wanted, what would be the cry of your heart?
- What would you like to “see” that you just can’t see right now?
- How would you define joy—as opposed to happiness or contentment?
- What would healing look like in your life? In your family? In our world? Do you see healing and salvation as the same thing or as something different?
- Would you describe your walk with Jesus as joyful? Why or why not?
- Would you describe worship as an experience of joy? Why or why not?
- What do you believe to be the heart of worship according to this story of the blind man?

## On the Road with WHPC....

- In what ways does WHPC walk in joy right now?
- What is the cry of our church’s heart at this time?
- During this time of transition, does the persistence of the blind man have anything to say to us as a congregation?
- How does our worship life demonstrate joy and persistence in glorifying God?

# My Walk with Jesus—Emily Craven



I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!” – Psalm 122:1

I grew up at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Fort Worth. From an early age, I loved being there; more than anything, I loved singing in worship. I remember standing in the aisles of that large, beautiful, stained-glass-filled sanctuary—choir members of all ages in every aisle and surrounding a full congregation—singing at the top of my lungs, “I was glad, glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord!” accompanied by trumpets and tympani and organ, grand and majestic and thrilling. I

experienced an overwhelming sense of being present with God in His holy temple and worshiping Him with all my heart and mind. In that moment, I felt myself a part of the community of believers too, bringing honor and glory to God’s name.

As a young person, I loved participating in the life of the church. I cherish memories of sitting with my parents when I was little, leaning against my Daddy’s strong arm, looking forward to a Lifesaver candy if I stayed still. Once I got older, I’d be sitting in the balcony with my youth-group friends, passing notes and giggling silently so as not to get in trouble. I loved spending Sunday evenings at church too, starting with choir practice, then dinner, then youth group. Church was a place to belong, a place of joy and friendship, a place of restoration, a place to experience God’s glory and presence.

In college, I experienced the usual church attendance drop off. But as a young adult I realized something was missing from my life. I was teaching at Westlake High School, where I loved working with my students and their families. It was such a joy and privilege to teach them, to nurture their musical gifts, and to be part of the WHS Choir family. Knowing that many of my students and their families attended WHPC, I joined the church in 1987. Through my relationships, I had been drawn back home, back to worship, and back to the beauty and mystery of being in God’s presence among God’s people. Singing in the Christmas and Easter Choirs, I remembered again the joy of serving and using my musical gifts for worship. So in 1989, when the WHPC music director left and I was asked to serve as an interim until they found the replacement, I said yes. And I’m still here! Looking back, I believe that throughout my youth, God was preparing me to answer the call to serve here at WHPC.

Leading music in worship brings me abundant joy, and I love sharing it with others. I love the rehearsal process, with our Worship Team and all our ensembles: thinking about the texts, perfecting the notes and rhythms, polishing the harmony and diction and phrasing, and figuring out how a particular piece of music can support the Word, really making it sing into the hearts of the congregation! I love teaching teamwork through music and nurturing kids to grow their gifts to serve God and others. I love presenting our music to the glory of God.

And most of all, I love how music elevates our worship. After almost 30 years, I can say that I am still glad to go into the house of the Lord. You could even say it’s my favorite walk! Because worship is where we draw near to God and one another, and where we can glimpse God’s glory. By pouring ourselves out to honor and praise Him, we find ourselves filled—with love for God and one another, and with joy for the journey ahead, no matter where it leads.