



We Have Here Only Five Loves and Two Fishes

A contemplative, embodied experience of noticing, offering, and receiving

Entering the Moment

Choose a posture that supports your body... sitting, standing, or walking. If helpful, keep your eyes open and softly focused, or let them close. Adjust as needed. You remain free to pause or stop at any point.

Notice contact points:

- feet with the floor,
- back with a chair,
- air on your skin.

Let awareness arrive at a pace that feels steady.

Breath Practice: “Receiving What Is Here”

Place one hand where it feels grounding... chest, lap, or side.

- **Inhale** as though receiving what is already here.
- **Exhale** as though allowing space around what feels tight or crowded.

No special rhythm is required. Simply notice breath entering and leaving. If attention wanders, that is okay. Return when you're ready.

After a few breaths, you may speak inwardly: *'Here I am, God.'*

Nothing else needs to be added.

Embodied Awareness Before Reading

Before engaging the text, take a brief inventory of your inner landscape.

Notice:

- sensations (warmth, tension, numbness, steadiness)
- emotional undercurrents
- impulses to hurry, analyze, withdraw, or lean in

Between instinct and response, there is space.
Rest there for a moment.

Awareness itself is already an offering.

Scripture | Matthew 14:13–21

Read slowly. If reading feels difficult today, listen to an audio version or allow someone else to read it aloud. You may also hold a single line in memory. The practice adapts to your capacity.

First Movement | Noticing What Shimmers

Read once.

Pause between phrases.

Let a word, image, or movement catch your attention. It may feel bright, unsettling, ordinary, or puzzling.

Rest with what draws you.

You might reflect:

- What begins to shimmer as this word or image settles within me?
- Where my attention lingers without effort?
- What memory, sensation, or association accompanies it?

Stay with noticing. Interpretation can wait.

Second Movement | Meeting Scarcity & Compassion

Read again.

Imagine yourself somewhere in the scene... among the crowd, near the disciples, beside the child, or watching from a distance. There is no correct vantage point.

Attend to the undercurrents.

- What rises within as scarcity is named?
- Where in my life does this worry about “not enough” feel familiar?
- What stirs while witnessing Jesus’ compassion toward the crowd?
- Where might hunger... physical, relational, spiritual... touch my life right now?

If discomfort appears, allow it to be acknowledged. If numbness appears, let that be honored too. Trauma can make stories of need or crowds feel overwhelming. You may shift your focus to a single detail... the grass, the baskets, the act of blessing. Agency remains yours.

Third Reading | Response of the Heart

Read a third time.

Notice what begins to take shape internally... desire, reluctance, grief, hope, resistance, steadiness.

In the story, the loaves are not increased before being offered. They are offered as they are.

- What in my life feels small yet present?
- Where a fragment longs to be seen rather than dismissed?
- What might be unfolding as I consider placing this into God’s hands?
- Where trust feels possible, even in partial form?

You may express your response through writing, drawing, stretching, walking, or silence. Movement can help the body integrate what words cannot hold.

This is not self-correction. It is participation.

Gathering the Fragments

The story ends with baskets of leftovers... evidence that nothing offered in love disappears.

Take a moment to notice:

- What remains with me now?
- Where nourishment feels real, even if subtle?
- What thread of courage, clarity, or compassion has become visible?

Let the fragments be gathered without pressure to explain them.

Closing Prayer

God of abundance,
You see the hunger in every crowd and the hidden offering in every hand.
Receive what I bring today... whole, fractured, or unfinished.
Bless what feels small.
Strengthen what feels fragile.
Gather what feels scattered.

Form in me the pattern of Christ...
compassion that notices,
trust that offers,
love that shares,
courage that participates in justice and restoration.

May what is given become part of Your renewing work in the world.
Amen.

Optional Return Later

At another time today, you might revisit this practice briefly.

- What continues to unfold from this story?
- What small offering feels held in a new light?
- What seems to nourish you as you recall this moment?"

Let these reflections unfold without striving.
Awareness is enough.

Footnote: This framework draws from biblical theology and Christian formation, informed by insights from Barbara Holmes, Howard Thurman, Thomas Keating, Lisa Sharon Harper, Sheila Wise Rowe, Lisa Fields (Jude3 Project), Tammy Marshall, and Tim Mackie (BibleProject).