

**Neighborhood Communion Group**  
**Discussion Questions**  
**Jesus and the Poor, part 1**

**Background**

The idea behind neighborhood communion groups arose from the earliest Christian communities that gathered regularly in homes for a time of eating and talking, something often missing in our busy lives. As you gather with friends, think of it as a throwback to the early church, or a dinner party in our day. Below, you'll find a Scripture passage, along with some suggested questions. Neighborhood Communion is a chance to enjoy food and food for thought.

**Scripture Passage**

**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. <sup>14</sup>When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. <sup>15</sup>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.' <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' <sup>17</sup>They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' <sup>18</sup>And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. <sup>21</sup>And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

**Discussion**

It is commonly accepted that 97% of the population in the Mediterranean world of Jesus were poor, taxes upon taxes taking their toll on the masses. In this passage, Jesus feeds those people, the *am ha aretz* (or "people of the land").

- 1) When it gets late, the disciples want to send the people away to buy food for themselves. Some scholars view this as hard-hearted on their part, others as generous concern. Either way, Jesus tells them to "give them something to eat." How do you view feeding the poor in our day? How do you think about food insecurity?
- 2) Jesus feeds them bread and the Gospel writer uses the language of Communion (taking, blessing, breaking, and giving). Have you ever thought of the Eucharist as related to feeding the poor? He also provides them with fish, which along with bread, was being heavily taxed by King Herod under Roman rule. How do systems in our day prevent the poor from having enough food to eat?

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- 3) In this account, as well as the other five versions of this story, leftovers are mentioned. Some view this as testimony to the abundance of God, others more directly as a summons for Jesus' followers then and now to feed the poor. Do you think there is enough food in the world to feed all persons? What might we do about hunger in our city, our world?