

SERMON – Pentecost 10 2021

TEXT: John 6:24-35
Ephesians 4:1-16

Grace, mercy and peace be yours this day from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last Sunday's Gospel text reminded us that when we think we encounter scarcity there can truly be plenty – even more than enough. Five loaves and two fish identified, a great crowd fed and satisfied, and there were leftovers.

But, this is not the end of the story in John's Gospel. As Dean Walling reminded everyone last Sunday, in this Lectionary year there is a total of 5 readings from this portion of John's Gospel on successive Sundays. If you will, it is a 5 course feast of bread.

Remembering last Sunday's introduction to this series of Gospel readings, it should come as no surprise that once again we read from the 6th Chapter of John's Gospel, and this reading begins with people looking for Jesus. Jesus and the disciples had moved on from the place where the crowd was fed on the previous day. John tells us that the crowd eventually found Jesus in the area of Capernaum.

The crowd was focused on a desire – or was it a need – to be where Jesus was. But why such an intensity of pursuit?

Jesus provides a reason for the crowd's search. "You are looking for me...because you ate your fill of the loaves." The crowd wanted to be with Jesus because their stomachs had been filled the previous day on the mountain side. Now, food is a basic need. If all a person hears is stomach growls...if all a person knows are hunger pains...if there is no strength because food is not available...if – if – if.....can it be known that God is at work?

On the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, the people became hungry and grumbled...God responded.

On the mountainside, God knew that the people needed to eat...God responded.

Now comes a teaching moment...on the other side of the water. Says Jesus... "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life...."

And the people miss the point – they don't understand the message. They are looking for food for their stomachs.

The people ask – “What must we do to perform the works of God?” In other words, “how do we work for the food that endures for eternal life”. Point missed again – “the Son of Man will **give** (it to) you.”

And again: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” “Believe in Him!”

The lack of understanding continues as the people question Jesus. Jesus reminds them that it was not Moses who fed them in the wilderness, it was God. “The bread of God ... gives life to the world”. “I am the bread of life”, Jesus tells them. “Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Surely we have heard these words before...but are we able to better understand what this means than were the people in the crowd that day? And if we claim to know what these words mean, does this make any difference in the way we live today?

In the reading from Ephesians that we also heard today, Paul challenges each person who receives this letter “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” and to do this with “humility...gentleness...patience...bearing with one another in love...making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.”

And more... “There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all”.

Still more...there are a variety of gifts...and everyone has a God given gift... “for the work of ministry...for building up the body of Christ.” And Christ is the head of this body.

This is belief in action...this is the in-dwelling of God's Spirit...the Spirit that strengthens the whole community and each individual in faith...the Spirit that sends us forth from this place.

This is the Spirit that enables us to believe and in believing be open to what God is doing.

My friends, being open to what God is doing and submitting everything to Jesus means we might not do what is wise, practical, advantageous, or safe....being open to God and submitting everything to God means that our doing is less important because we are not in charge....we are not in control. Believe me when I say, for someone who likes to think he is in control, this is not easy....but it is necessary.

And, we are fed not just for the moment, but for eternity. This is claiming the promise of Jesus: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

And to this promise we respond.... "So be it!"

Amen.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.