

**Proper 13 Year B**

**8/1/2021**

**2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a; Psalm 51:1-13; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35**

**Rev. Mark A. Lafler**

Our Gospel reading today is a continuation of our stories from last week...

Deacon Bob led us into the sixth chapter of John with his wonderful “double-header” sermon...

featuring the stories of the feeding of the five thousand and when Jesus walks on water.

The sixth chapter of John is one of power, meaning, and length as it is 71 verses long.

Easily the longest chapter in the Gospel of John.

In fact, the organizers of our lectionary readings (the way our 3-year cycle of readings have been organized)

have deemed John 6 so important...

that we will spend a total of 5 weeks in this chapter alone.

So we may want to pay attention to the words of this chapter.

I would encourage you to meditate on this chapter over the coming weeks.

Read, mark, and learn the words of our Lord...

Wrestle with them in study...

And pray that God will reveal his Holy truth to you.

As we focus each Sunday on the Gospel of John chapter 6.

Our reading today picks up where last week's reading stopped.

It was the day after the feeding of the five thousand...

And the people noticed that Jesus and his disciples had left...

So they got into boats themselves and went searching for Jesus.

They eventually found Jesus and asked, "When did you come here?"

They were looking for Jesus...

Because they liked what they saw...

They liked what he did.

He fed thousands of people...

Meeting a very natural need.

They wanted more.

But Jesus turns this into a lesson for them...

Into a teaching about who the Son of Man is...

Who Jesus, himself is...

Jesus knew they were not looking for signs of who the Messiah is...

But for food...

For their own satisfaction.

Jesus said to them:

*Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me,  
NOT because you saw the signs I performed  
but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.*

They wanted to find Jesus for their own advantage...

They wanted Jesus because of what he could do for them...

Twelfth century German mystic, Meister Eckhardt warned:

*Some people want to see God with their eyes as they see a cow,  
and to love him as they love their cow.*

*They love their cow for the milk and cheese and profit it makes them.*

*This is how it is with people who love God for the sake of outward  
wealth and inward comfort.*

*They do not rightly love (God) for their own advantage.*

It's the love of God only for the blessings of this life.

Well, this is a warning for us too...

We know what God is asking of us...

We hear it all the time in church...

It is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our soul,  
all of our strength, all of our mind...

He wants us to love him with our whole being...

And yet, if the only time we turn to him in prayer...

The only time we search him out...

Is in our moment of need...

How is that loving him with our whole being?

God is calling us into a greater relationship with him than that.

He is calling us to be fully transformed by his grace...

His love...

Through the power of His Spirit... present within us.

We can look at what God does for us in this and that...

But what we really need to be looking at is the very presence of God.

What matters is not just what Jesus can do for you;

what matters is who Jesus is. (N. T. Wright)

The people were thinking about filling their stomachs...  
And did not notice the signs pointing toward the very presence of God  
who was right before them.

Jesus is pointing toward much more than just their desire for a meal...  
So he takes it a step further...  
he hints at who he is.

Saying:

*Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life,  
which the Son of Man will give you.*

*For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.*

Just as a king would stamp their seal of approval on a letter with their  
ring...

So, Jesus is suggesting the seal of approval on the Son of Man...  
Himself.

The people then ask for a sign... saying:

*Give us a sign... so that we may see it and believe in you?*

It seems a bit silly that now they ask for a sign so that they can believe in who Jesus is.

Was it not just the day before that he fed over 5,000 people with 5 loaves of bread and two fish? (Salted fish too)

And now they want a sign to believe Jesus is the Messiah?

And yet...

How often do we demand Jesus do this and do that?

How often do we say I will do this for you Lord if you do this for me?

We need eyes and ears for the very presence of Jesus...

And not just what we want him to do...

Not just what we want him to be.

Jesus doesn't even answer their request for a further sign,

He doesn't go there...

instead, he points out that the real answer to their question is standing in front of them.

He says:

*For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*

You see there is a deeper bread...

A more meaningful bread...

Not just the kind that fuels our energy...

But a bread that sustains us for all of eternity...

A bread that is broken for our sins...

A bread that is offered as a sacrifice so that a way can be made for eternal life.

A bread that was nailed to the cross for the salvation of all who believe.

Jesus said:

*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

It's about the presence of God...

Spending time with the bread of life.

And I'm not just talking about a prayer here and a good deed there.

It's being in the presence of God...

Truly, seeking Jesus...

Because he is God...

Even if you have to get in a boat and cross the lake...

Looking and searching for him...

Not just seeking him because he can answer your physical hunger.

But seeking him because you love him...

Because where else would we turn...

Only Jesus has the words of eternal life...

Because He is the Bread of life.

Last Thursday night, we finished *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis to wrap up our Adult Bible Conversation (ABC)...

Our weekly Christian study...

It really was a wonderful study and conversation...

Well, C. S. Lewis concluded the book with words that go right along with what we are talking about here...

He wrote:

*Submit [to God] with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing.*

*Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours.*

*Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead.*

*Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay.*

*But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.<sup>1</sup>*

If we just look for Jesus to meet a momentary need...  
We are missing out on the real person of who Jesus is.

I want to conclude today with verse 34 from our Gospel reading.  
It is the people's response to Jesus when he says that the bread of God comes to give life to the world.

The people responded to him...

*They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."*

May that be our prayer.

Lord, give us this bread... the bread of life... always.

During the troubles of a pandemic and financial difficulty...

May we feast on the bread of life.

When the good times are rolling, and we seem to hit our stride...

May we feast on the bread of life.

---

<sup>1</sup> CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1944, 2001), 227.

When we grow weary or frustrated because things aren't going our way...

May we feast on the bread of life.

No matter the moment, the season, or the hour...

May our prayer be:

*Sir, give us this bread always.*

Jesus, fill us with the bread of life.

Amen.