

SERMON: 10th SUNDAY after PENTECOST

August 1, 2021

COLLECT: Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE LESSONS: Old Testament: Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15

Psalm 78:23-29

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-16

Gospel: John 6:24-35

THE SERMON: There is a common theme in today's Old Testament lesson and the Gospel. The theme is feeding God's people. In Exodus people are angry and complaining because they have no food to eat. They are rebelling against Moses. It doesn't matter that Moses has gotten them out of the harsh conditions they were living and working under in Egypt. It doesn't matter that they are now on the road to freedom to a land that God has promised them.

On this journey to the Promised land the Israelites have suffered some hardships. They have been walking in the desert for years, they have no shelter other than tents they may have brought with them. They can't sit around the fires and eat their fill of food and there is little drinking water.

They accused Moses of bringing them out into the desert to die. They are constantly complaining about being hungry and thirsty. This journey has taken longer than they wanted, it's been years, and they didn't have enough food when they began the journey.

God heard the complaining and saw Moses' frustration. So, he told Moses to tell the people that in the evening they would have meat and, in the morning, they would have all the bread they could eat. Moses indeed told the people. That evening a flock of quail appeared covering the camp and there was manna in the morning. Moses told the people that this was food that God had given them. And God continued to feed them manna, bread like flakes that appeared as frost on the ground, throughout their journey to the Promised land.

You can imagine that now their bellies were filled there would be less complaining, but there were other things they complained about and blamed Moses for.

In the Gospel lesson for today, Jesus too had a crowd of people following him. Jesus looked at the huge crowd of people following and seeking him. It was late in the evening and he asked his disciple Philip where could they get food to feed this crowd of people. There was 5000 people and Philip knew they didn't have enough money to feed them. He told Jesus it would take about six-month wages to buy enough food so that each person could have a little to eat.

Another disciple Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, told Jesus there was a little boy there who had five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus told Andrew to bring them to him. The people were to sit in groups on the ground. Jesus took the bread and the fish said a blessing over them and began to feed the crowd.

Can you imagine feeding 5000 people with five loaves and two fish? Can you imagine God as a magician who just kept putting bits of bread and fish into

the hands of Jesus? Think about the amount of bread and fish that had to keep growing, growing and growing to feed all the people. Did God just keep on producing and producing? The writer of this Gospel seems to imply that God just kept the bread and fish coming.

Or was it like a picnic? In those times when people knew they would be away from their homes for a period of time, they packed a lunch, a bit of food to sustain them on their journey. While they were sitting in their groups did each of them share what they had?

The scripture says that the people ate as much as they wanted and still there were 12 baskets of left overs.

The people were so impressed with Jesus after this feeding that they wanted to make him their king.

Why? He was healing the sick, driving out demons and feeding them with all the food they wanted. If he was king, they would have no worries, he would take care of all their problems.

Jesus heard they wanted to make him their king. So, he slipped away from them. Yet people got into boats and went looking for Jesus and his disciples in Capernaum. Jesus knew they were looking for him because he had fed them abundantly with the bread and fish. Jesus knew they were more impressed with the feeding than the signs or miracles he had been doing,

Jesus said instead of working for physical food they should be working on the eternal relationship with God that he was offering. The people then asked Jesus what must they do to do the work of God. He said, "Believe in me, the Father has sent me to you." The crowd asked him, "What signs or miracles are you going to give us or do so, that we can see and believe in you?"

You gave us bread to eat, our ancestors, led by Moses, ate manna in the wilderness. Jesus told them it wasn't Moses who gave them that bread, but God. He then told the people God would give them true bread. This true bread would come from God and would sustain them throughout their lives.

When asked to give them this true bread, Jesus said, "I am the Bread of life, whoever comes to or believes in me will never be hungry or thirsty again."

What I think Jesus is saying is that if we believe in him, we will have an ever-present presence of God in our lives. God will provide a way so that all our needs are met.

And as I have heard it said, "GOD WILL FIX IT FOR YOU!" Amen

Rev. Lionel Starkes