

Worship Outline including Reflection for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Opening Verse of Scripture John 6.35

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

Collect: Prayer for the Day

Lord of heaven and earth, as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer, give us patience and courage never to lose hope, but always to bring our prayers before you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Reading: Exodus 16.2–4, 9–15

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.' Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.'

Then Moses said to Aaron, 'Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, "Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining."' And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord spoke to Moses and said, 'I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God."' In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, 'It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.'

Second Reading: Ephesians 4.1-16

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'

(When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Gospel Reading: John 6.24-35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." ' Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.' Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Reflection

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life.'"

Last week Jesus multiplied the bread and fish for a vast crowd. After he performed the multiplication, Jesus realized that the people wanted to make him king, so he slipped off by himself. The crowd chased after him and, as we hear today, they found him on the other side of the lake, at Capernaum. It is typical in John's Gospel that after Jesus performs a miracle he enters into a

dialogue, either with some Pharisees, or as we see today, with the crowds. This is John's way to draw out the deeper meaning of the "sign" Jesus has performed and its meaning for the Christian community for whom John was writing his gospel.

After Jesus fed the 5000, the crowd woke to find that he and his disciples had crossed the lake to Capernaum. They did not want to be separated from somebody who had found a way to conjure up food out of thin air and so they set off in boats to try to find Jesus. When they find Jesus on the other side of the lake, they ask him when had he arrived. Jesus has no time for their small talk and tells them that their reason for being there is purely and simply that they are after another free lunch. Jesus tells them that they haven't even come because they have recognised that a miracle had taken place. He knows that what they are after is a meal ticket.

The response of the crowd shows something that can happen with us in our own walk with God when we think, "What can you do for me?" Twelfth century mystic Meister Eckhardt warned that "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 their own sake of outward wealth and inward comfort."

Jesus saw the hunger of the crowds and fed them. Certainly, he would want us to address the physical hungers of those in our community. But Jesus is not just interested in the body, he is concerned for the soul. Jesus tries to use this wrong motive, their appetite for bread, and direct their thoughts instead into a hunger for the imperishable food of eternal life. The bread which Jesus offers is about knowing God at work in human lives. While Jesus addresses people's physical hungers, he also challenges them not to search for physical food alone – for they will be hungry again. Besides physical appetites, we also have spiritual and emotional hungers.

So how can we challenge our own motives? Do we love God and seek to follow Christ? Or are we just seeking our own spiritual or even physical comfort? It might be interesting to ask ourselves the following questions - How often do I think in terms of what God can do for me instead of reflecting on what God has already done for me? Is our love for God a selfish love? Perhaps that is too hard a question to answer? There is a helpful quotation from Teresa of Avila which might help us test our motives "We cannot know whether we love God, although there may be strong reason for thinking so, but there can be no doubt about whether we love our neighbour or not."

Living the life of Jesus in the world is hard. We can get discouraged, want to give up, or even lose our way. Sometimes the world of death seems to be triumphing

over the life God wants to give us. The front page of any newspaper is enough to discourage us. However, the gospel today reminds us we are not making our journey alone. We travel with one another, sustained by the bread of life given us by a gracious love of God. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

God of our pilgrimage, you have willed that the gate of mercy should stand open for those who trust in you: look upon us with your favour that we who follow the path of your will may never wander from the way of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.