

July 25th, 2021 – Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

Introduction to the Day

Today is the first of five Sundays with gospel readings from John 6, the first four of which focus on Jesus as bread of life. Today Jesus feeds thousands of people with five loaves and two fish. What we have, what we bring to Jesus' table, seems like it is not nearly enough to meet all the needs we see around us. But it is not the adequacy of our supplies or our skills that finally makes the difference: it is the power of Jesus working in the littlest and least to transform this world into the world God desires, a world where all the hungry are satisfied.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the God of manna,
the God of miracles,
the God of mercy.

Amen.

Drawn to Christ and seeking God's abundance,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our provider,

help us.

It is hard to believe there is enough to share.

**We question your ways when they differ from
the ways**

of the world in which we live.

**We turn to our own understanding
rather than trusting in you.**

**We take offense at your teachings and your
ways.**

Turn us again to you.

Where else can we turn?

**Share with us the words of eternal life
and feed us for life in the world.**

Amen.

Beloved people of God:

in Jesus, the manna from heaven,
you are fed and nourished.

By Jesus, the worker of miracles,
there is always more than enough.

Through Jesus, † the bread of life,
you are shown God's mercy:

you are forgiven and loved into abundant life.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, you have placed within the hearts of all your children a longing for your word and a hunger for your truth. Grant that we may know your Son to be the true bread of heaven and share this bread with all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Children's Message

Gospel – John 6:1-21

¹Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ⁹“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” ¹⁰Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

¹⁵When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. ²⁰But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” ²¹Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Life for Life.

Jesus is the Bread of Life.

Jesus is our Bread for Life.

In hearing that theme today we get a glimpse of just what God can do with so little. And how it is that we respond when we hear about it.

The crowd, and we continually hear about this eager crowd, has pushed in on where Jesus and his followers are gathered. The crowd keeps following because they have seen the signs that Jesus has done. John’s Gospel frequently refers to the “signs” that Jesus does which point to the true nature of God. And again, in this story, we see yet another sign.

Now, we may think of this sign, or miracle, as Jesus being able to feed such a crowd with so little. And I don’t want to say that it isn’t a miracle, but what if that isn’t necessarily the miracle at play here?

First, Jesus knew what Jesus was going to do. And, he probably knew how his disciples were going to him doing what he was going to do. And remember Jesus is a compassionate soul and looking at the crowd he knew they needed to be fed. Jesus knew there was about to be a sign of God’s abundance in this moment. And he kind of has a little bit of fun with it.

The disciples are aghast at Jesus thinking they will be able to feed this crowd, especially with it being late in the day, but he proposes the question. “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?”

After some lobbing of excuses, Andrew comes forward with a little boy. We don’t know how this exchange went, but I envision there being some form of calling for any food that anyone might have. I don’t imagine the disciples to be the type to go about the crowd strongarming folks to get what they have. They just don’t strike

me as a band of robbers, perhaps in the Robinhood sense, but they aren't going to go about taking from the poor to feed the poor. Which means this boy had to offer up what he had.

With a measly five barley loaves and two fish in his bag, he offers it up for the greater good. And look how the greater good responds, "But what are they among so many people?"

We so often think that the little we have to offer isn't going to be enough.

With the little that this boy has to offer, Jesus feeds the crowd to the point of being full and there are leftovers.

You don't need me to tell you that this is a story of God's abundant love for God's people. That God could take something so little, and fill the masses to the point of overflowing. That is the no duh statement of the Gospel for this Sunday. But, there is more.

As we launch into the Bread of Life discourse where we get five weeks in John's Gospel of Jesus the Bread of Life.

But, the Jesus we get in this Gospel is the Bread FOR Life. That boy with that basket of bread and fish was in that crowd because, at the very least, his parents heard of the signs that Jesus had done. That boy was in that crowd because he had heard what Jesus was about and thought that maybe, just maybe, Jesus was for him, too. And, that boy was in that crowd offering up what little he had, because what he had heard about Jesus and the signs that he had done, had him wondering if he could do anything with the little bit he had to offer.

Sound familiar? Perhaps you've wondered it about yourself. Can I really make that much of a difference? Is this little act really earth changing? Will anyone really notice?

God's answer is so cliché, but it is a resounding yes.

Yes, that little thing that you are thinking about doing will make a difference.

If you don't think so, tell it to the woman in the crowd who thought she could be healed if she could just touch his cloak. Tell it to the leader of the synagogue who came running, knowing that if Jesus would just come and see his daughter she would be healed. Tell it to the little boy who had heard what Jesus can do and offered up what little he had to feed the crowd that had come because they had heard of the Good News of God's Love for God's people.

Jesus, the Bread of Life, sustains us for life in the world. It is a bread of which there is a constant abundance needing, begging, pleading, yearning to be shared.

So what are we to with it?

I have food. I can share.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Rooted in Christ and sustained by the Spirit, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church. Bless the ministries of our neighboring congregations (*especially*). Empower churches throughout the world and encourage missionaries who accompany global neighbors. Kindle in us a spirit of collaboration, that all people may know your loving works. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for creation. Send rain to lands experiencing drought and come to the aid of those enduring sweltering heat. Nurture wheat and barley crops grown for the nourishment of your people and conserve aquatic habitats and fish populations. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for those who govern. Cast out arrogance, selfishness, and corruption and instruct those who lead to practice compassion and humility. Inspire them with a vision of the common good and a commitment to ensure that all who hunger are fed. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for those bowed down by heavy burdens: those who are unemployed or underemployed, those unable to find affordable housing, and those without health insurance. Console those who grieve and hear the cries of those who call to you for healing especially *Kathy Smith, Matt Miller, Bill and Betty Davey, Bob Kries, Jim and Sandy Nelson, Joe Christensen, Marilee Julson, Bill Kuehn, Shirley Stark.*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for this assembly. Deepen our resolve to use what we have to serve those in need. When we worry that we do not have enough resources for ministry, assure us of your abundance. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We give thanks for those who have died. As you sustained them through all their days, so dwell in our hearts, that we may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We lift these and all our prayers to you, O God, confident in the promise of your saving love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Jesus, Bread of life,
you have set this table with your very self,
and called us to the feast of plenty.

Gather what has been sown among us,
and strengthen us in this meal.

Make us to be what we receive here,
your body for the life of the world.

Amen.

Words of Institution – We invite you to find bread and wine or juice and partake in this Holy Meal.

(Holding the bread) In the night in which we was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, gave thanks and gave it for all to eat saying, “This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

(Holding the cup) Again after supper he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it for all to drink saying, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. So often as you do this, remember me.”

Once you’ve taken the elements say, “Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**”

Lord’s Prayer

Blessing

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
✠ be upon you now and forever.

Amen.

Go in peace, you are the body of Christ.

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

REMINDER: There will NOT be worship at Good Shepherd this Sunday. Good Shepherd is the host for Praise in the Park this Sunday and we encourage you to attend worship there at 10 am!