

SERMON – Proper 13 (August 1, 2021)

Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15

Psalm 78:23-29

Ephesians 4:1-16

Gospel of John 6:24-35

Title: “May we surrender ourselves as we accept the Bread of Life that Jesus is offering”

**Open our hearts Lord Jesus so that we may hear what the Spirit is saying.
Amen**

“Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land; I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand: Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore, feed me now and ever more.”

What wonderful words we heard sung this morning in our hymns. The words of the hymns lead us right into the Gospel Reading as Jesus invites us to partake of the Bread of Life also referred to as the Bread of Heaven; the only bread that will nourish and sustain us as we choose a life filled with God’s Love.

The words, **I am the Bread of Life** stuck with me when I read and re-read the passage from John’s gospel for today. But there are also other things in this passage that are noteworthy, like the crowds who Jesus fed in last week’s gospel story, who did not understand the significance of the feeding of the multitude and who were there to fill their hungry stomachs, They had to ask Jesus for a Sign so they could believe in him. We will notice that the people in John’s Gospel were always looking for ‘Signs’ from Jesus.

The Sign that was so easily missed by the people in Jesus’ day and even maybe for some of us today is that we are to have ***faith and trust in the Living God who sent his Son Jesus to lead us to eternal life.***

Do we need a Sign to understand the teachings of Jesus? We have to remember that everything Jesus teaches us has a divine or spiritual meaning and it is not always easy for us to understand what he is trying to teach us; that is why this journey we are on we do it together, to help each other. We do it in community as The Body of Christ.

Something else in the Gospel we just heard and should pay attention to is the referral by the people to their ancestors in the Exodus story we read. As the Israelites

are traveling through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land, they are exceedingly hungry and they are complaining to Moses and Aaron their leaders, as to how they have brought them out of Egypt where they had plenty to eat. Never mind the fact that God has delivered them out of slavery and has now made them free people, but their immediate need for food led to their complaining. Well, God heard their complaints and commands the people to follow his instructions as to how the food he will send them should be eaten. The people obey God's commands and now they are well fed and feeling very satisfied.

Is there a Sign in this story too? God, despite all our complaints in this life, loves and cares for his people and continues to provide for all of us. The Exodus story as well as the Feeding of the Five Thousand show us God's Grace in Abundance. Grace is a free gift from God which we do not earn all we have to do is accept it. We are also reminded when we say the Lord's Prayer "**Give us this day our daily bread**" that God is our source of supply for everything we need and we are to trust God to be with us this day to give us what we need - no more and no less. The Lord's Prayer is a sermon for another time, which I would love to do.

Let us now return to the story in the Gospel of John which we will hear more about over the next two weeks when Jesus continues to teach about the Bread of Life. What is this Bread that Jesus is offering us? Bread is a very staple food for many people, how is the Bread that Jesus is offering us different from the physical bread we all eat? Do we want to find out more about the Bread Jesus is offering? Are we hungry enough to want to find out? What does our soul hunger for? Are we hungry for more of God's Word so that our relationship with God can go deep and wide? How does what Jesus is offering us fit into our present life; does God come first in our life or do we put God after everything else?

Hard questions indeed but nobody said that following Jesus would be easy. It takes focus, discipline and a desire to open our heart to let God in where we can feel God's Love so that we can trust and believe in the One in whose image we are made.

I think what Jesus means by offering us **The Bread of Life/ the Bread of Heaven**" is that he wants us to open our heart to invite him in so that we can receive the abundant love that God has for us.

Jesus describes himself as **Bread** because it is a basic food that we all need, and God provides the basic needs for our spiritual growth. Just as we need physical bread we also need spiritual bread to sustain our spiritual hunger through a relationship with Jesus. We build our faith by trusting in God who is "The Way, the Truth and the

Life,” and we do not do this by ourselves that is why we are called the Body of Christ and we gather together each week to be filled with God’s sustaining food that is freely given to us. It is a coming together to seek the same outcome as we share our stories, cry with those who suffer and rejoice together when we see small miracles.

All these things change our life and we are able to find everlasting **Peace and Joy** so that we can live in **Hope and Love**. In a short while we will come to this Table to be nourished for the pilgrimage we are on as we receive **The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven**, the only food that will sustain us through all that we may have to go through in our life.

As these readings today are all about food, I recently had a very interesting conversation with Canon Whitney in the Office of the Diocese, and she asked me what I thought was one of the strengths of Trinity, and I immediately said, **“We like to feed people,”** and I then went on to tell her about our Community Garden, the Share-A-Meal Program and the drive-by Food donations we have been having. She was amazed and along with what the Bishop said when he was here for Confirmation, that Trinity has an incredible story to share.

We at Trinity have been physically feeding people in St Charles for a long time. Do we need to do more than we are doing? After all, Jesus calls us to take care of the poor and the hungry and that is what we have been doing; that is Trinity’s Call to action. Of course we can always pray for the people who receive our food, even if we do not know them. We can pray that as they eat the food we provide they will feel God’s presence and know that God loves and cares deeply for them in whatever their circumstance may be. We can also take humble pleasure in knowing that we are doing what we can to provide food for those who are hungry and we give Thanks to God that we are able to do this Ministry.

My friends, we are on this journey together, there are times we will fall but we will help each other up and there are times that we may not agree with each other, but we will respect each other’s differences. I would encourage us to share more of our spiritual struggles and achievements with each other because that is how we grow.

As we continue on our pilgrimage here are a few words of encouragement by Howard Thurman from his book “Meditations of the Heart”. It is called, **“I surrender myself to God”** and reads as follows:

“The central element in communion with God is the act of self-surrender. The symbol of my prayer this day is the open heart. Somehow, I must make God central to

me and in me, over and above the use to which I wish or need to put His energy and His power. I surrender myself to God without any conditions or reservations. I shall not bargain with God; I shall lay bare the very center of me. As this happens, I come into the meaning of true freedom and the burdens that I seemed unable to bear are floated in the current of the life and love of God. The central element in communion with God is the act of self-surrender.”

My friends in Christ, Oh what a Joyful day when we can open our hearts to accept Jesus as the Bread we need our life, and it is all ours for the tasting!

AMEN