

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I. Gospel

A. Our Gospel reading today picks up where last week's story of the Feeding of the 5,000 ended.

1. Jesus has fed the crowds – he and the Disciples left that place and sailed home toward Capernaum.

2. And so the crowds began looking for him, thinking that when they found him, he would do more miracles – and maybe even feed them again.

3. Perhaps if he kept this up, they thought, they would never have to look for food again.

- After all, didn't Moses feed their **Ancestors** with **MANNA** in the wilderness?

4. So they try to coax Jesus along saying, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you?"

5. These are the same people who just witnessed the Feeding of the 5,000 the day before – and they are asking for **SIGNS**?

B. So just what was this **MANNA** they keep talking about.

1. An excellent question – and more apt than you might know.

2. We find the story in the 16th chapter of the Book of Exodus.

3. After their liberation from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites began their journey across the Sinai wilderness.

4. But within a month, their **jubilation** turned to **discontent**, and they began to grumble against Moses and Aaron about the lack of water and the scarcity of food.

5. *“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;”* they lamented, *“for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”*

6. Then, the Lord says to Moses, *“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.’”*

7. So each evening QUAIL appeared; and in the morning the ground was covered with “a fine flakey substance.”

8. The people looked at this stuff and said, “What is it?” – which is a play on words – for in Hebrew “What is it?” is MANNA.

9. And so for the rest of their journey this daily provision of MANNA would sustain them.

10. As one commentator wrote, “This is the God of abundance who enters into a covenantal relationship with the people, hears their cries, and responds to their needs.”

C. But Jesus knows what is at the heart of all this, and so he tries to set them straight.

1. He tells the people that they shouldn’t be worrying about earthly things – they should focus on heavenly things – the true things that come from God.

2. He reminds that, amazing as it was, that the **manna** their Ancestors ate in the wilderness, was really nothing more than a temporary fix for the temporary problem of keeping the people fed.

3. He then says, *“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.”*

4. Still thinking this is something of substance, the people say, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

5. To which Jesus replies, *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

II. Being fed to do the work of Eternal Life

A. “I am the Bread of Life,” we will be hearing this again and again, as today begins four Sundays of Gospel readings from the sixth chapter of John.

1. It is a passage full of imagery – indeed, much of our Eucharistic imagery, as we will see, has its roots here.

2. But the danger for us, as it was for the crowds, is to try to take Jesus too literally and not remember that he is speaking in a spiritual sense.

3. Rather than a **physical hunger**, it is a **spiritual hunger** that Jesus, as the Bread of Life, seeks to relieve.

B. What do WE hunger for – and how can Jesus address that need?

1. Frederick Buechner puts it this way: “Man does not live by bread alone, but he also does not live long without it.

- “To eat is to acknowledge our dependence – both on food and on each other.

- “It also reminds us of other kinds of emptiness that not even the Blue Plate Special can touch.”

2. So I ask again, what do WE hunger for – and how can Jesus fill that need?

3. We live in one of, if not the, richest nation in the world – and yet there is HUNGER all around us.

4. I don’t mean **physical hunger** – although God knows we have plenty of that to deal with too – I mean **SPIRITUAL hunger** – a hunger we try to fill all the time, with everything but what truly will satisfy it.

5. Our hearts ache with hunger – hunger for love, hunger for belonging – **hunger for a relationship with God.**

6. And yet we try to fill that void as we consume, consume, consume – we eat too much – we buy too much – we give our hearts away to the wrong things – and we clutch tightly to everything we think is ours out of fear that someone or something might take it away.

7. We are hungry, hungry, hungry – and all we need to do is turn to the **Bread of Life** to be fed.

C. Jesus says that the way we are FILLED is by doing the work of eternal life.

1. When asked what that work is, Jesus replies, *“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*

2. So then believing in Jesus is the work of God;

- And by believing in Jesus our deepest hunger will be filled.

3. And then we are to extend this work, to helping others to believe as well.

III. Jesus = Food that Lasts

A. And yet, our world is so full of this constant consumerism and noise that it makes it hard to even hear God’s message of love.

1. Even when we try to listen for the Word of God, we often find that there are other voices in our hearts, and in the world around us that make God’s voice difficult to hear.

2. Ask yourself what makes it difficult for you really to believe in God’s presence with you and within you?

- What makes it difficult to hear God’s voice?

3. What makes it so hard to turn to God with our longings for love and relationship, for acceptance and wholeness and let God work to fill them?

4. What are we afraid of – that God will demand something in return – our life, our love, our time, our talents, our treasure, all those things we THINK are ours – all those things God GAVE us for doing the work of God?

5. And what is the work of God – but believing in the One God has sent, Jesus the Bread of Life, who can fill our hungers and comfort our pain – if we only let him – and encouraging others to do the same.

B. Our Souls are hungry – with a hunger that can only be filled by the Bread of Life.

1. Our society is hungry – especially in this ambiguous time of reopening – with a hunger we consume and consume to try and fill, but to no avail – for the only thing that can fill that void is God,

2. Let us strive to be open – separating out the noise of this world that we may hear the call of God.

3. And when we do, let us then be about the **work of God** – believing in the One who God has sent – the BREAD for our lives and the lives of those around us.

4. And then, share the Good News that there is a satisfaction for the hunger in our lives – a deep and lasting satisfaction – there for us and for all who will reach out to take it – Jesus the Bread of Life.

Let Us Pray

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN. (BCP p. 219)