

March 19 2017

Scripture Lesson

John 6:1-15, 25-40

Sermon *Well Fed*

This morning we are going to turn to the Gospel of John, we are going to be in chapter 6 which is on page 973 and I am going to invite you to read the first part of the verses 1-15 and later we will go the second half verses 25-40. It will be a two-part story that John records here. We will be talking about well fed people.

Starting at verse 1-6: 1-15

“After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?’ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, ‘Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.’ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?’ Jesus 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. Then 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. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.’ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When 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.’ When 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.”

Reader: This is the word of our Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

When my husband, Gary, and I first got married, I would say to him, “Did you get enough to eat?” How many of you have said that to a guest? “Did you get enough to eat?” When you think about it, that is a queer thing to say. Gary grows up in a family that never said that. He used to say, “If I ever wanted more, I would have taken more.” He used to say, where did you ever get this? I don’t know if it was a mid-west saying or if it was a German thing. We all looked like Germans who had eaten well, and that somehow it that became part of hospitality. So every time he went to somebody’s house, they would say, I would look at him and smile.

Jesus didn't have to ask the disciples to feed the five thousand, according to John, he fed them himself. And that is an interesting twist on John, you know, I got a different picture of this feeding. I imagined Jesus walking among the people as the disciples brought the baskets of fish and rolls. What changed my view---Jesus could have stood back here---you could almost see him chatting with someone. Maybe he did say, "Did you get enough to eat". "Or maybe you could take more from one of the baskets." Maybe like at a family dinner, "Like please pass the potatoes." One of the interesting things about looking at looking at John, John is often very different from Matthew, Mark and Luke. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called synoptic gospels—looking the same at the story. Matthew had a lot of good stories verbatim from Mark. Luke is a little different. This is the only miracle that is told in all four Gospels. There are two other gospels that tell of another feeding of four thousand. And they made it very clear that was a second event. And they also talked about feeding of five thousand and Mark tells the of five thousand men but does not mention women and children. So this could have been the feeding of the fifteen thousand. We just don't know. We know it wasn't just men- we know it is more than just men; it was families of the people that followed.

They ate as much as they wanted. These were people who often experienced poverty. The Roman Empire was not a kind place to be poor in and probably no empire is. Taxes were high and the economy was hopeless and yet the people had a balance of hope. They were hoping for the Messiah. It was the time of great fervor when the people were starting to look for a Messiah here or there. There was a sense that they were right on the edge that something amazing would happen. We don't know what Jesus taught. John doesn't even talk about his teaching; I guess he figured, it was a foregone conclusion that he was teaching. We first hear that Jesus taught when he mentioned, "How about the food?" How about the food? We do know why the people came. They did not come to hear a good sermon. They did not come for a prayer time. They did not come to snap a selfie with Jesus. They did come to Bethsaida Julias on the Sea of Galilee because as John said, they had seen Jesus healing people. John said Jesus came apart because the crowds had pressed on him. You see this was early in his career and they were already pressing on him.

In the other gospels, we read more about the people who saw the boat leave. They saw Jesus' boat leave and they figured out and could see exactly where it was going. It was going to Bethsaida Julias and so Mark says, they ran the nine miles on land to meet the boat that had about a four mile journey. They ran toward the town to meet Jesus there.

John never says anything that isn't important. If you read the Gospel of John, pay attention to his mention of festivals because the things that happen at festival time often has deeper meaning that we often don't get. It was about the time of the

Festival of Passover. That is the biggest Jewish festival. And it is interesting, Barkley talks about how they didn't want to go through Samaria because they hated the Samaritans. That road went through guess that road went through—guess what—Bethsaida Julias. Not only was the crowd that heard him but there were crowds that joined on the way. The people would say, "Come on—Come on, guess what we saw?" "Guess what is going on?" "Maybe he is the one?" And they made it there. And they met Jesus on a lovely grassy slope near the shore.

We hear it in the other gospels Jesus had compassion. Compassion in the Greek is the word *racham* feelings for these people. If you watch the news or you have been with a friend grieving, you feel within the depths of your being. Jesus realized that these people were sheep without a shepherd. There was this spiritual need that he recognized in these people. John records Jesus' first question in this miracle. "Where are we going to buy bread for these people to eat?" He aches for their physical needs. If you go to the other gospels you will find that the disciples in those gospels raised the question about feeding the people. I am guessing both sides are right. The disciple said it is getting late; we are in a remote situation. I think it is like Quilena, Washington where there were a couple of Ma and Pa stores and if you wanted a head of lettuce, you got that head of lettuce or no lettuce. You couldn't feed five thousand or if you got all the people in town together you could feed five thousand but not from those food stores. And the disciples suggested—go home--dismiss them—let them find their own food and shelter—we have nothing—show is over—its over---but Jesus was after looking at them.

Coming back to John he talks first to Philip and I didn't know this until yesterday Philip came from where? Guess Bethsaida Julias, it was in his home town; if anyone would know how to feed people in that town—Philip should know and he said, "It would take 200 denari—wages of six months to give everybody a taste. "It is impossible!" We don't have that kind of money—we are poor preachers—we are twelve we have left everything there is no way we can feed five thousand people." Then up comes Peter's brother Andrew and Andrew says "Jesus. There is this boy and he has got five barley loaves and a couple of fish." I would love to meet that kid. You know that those three Stewart boys, Benji, Toby, and Ford would do that. They would offer their lunch to Jesus "I don't have much but here it is." creative idea that is not possible but it kind of looks impossible but it is a start. Jesus isn't looking for impossible answers. And Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." The other gospels say in groups of fifty but whatever. Jesus takes the loaves and he blesses them and they start filling baskets, keep that word baskets in mind I found out where the left-overs go. Where do you think the left overs went? And Jesus blesses them and breaks the bread and he distributes them to those who are seated and they eat and they eat. And they eat the very bread of life. "I am the Bread of life" Jesus says. And the very Bread of life hands out the bread and he

serves them himself. We stop for a moment; John was seated with Jesus at the Last Supper. He was an eye witness and all the people were well fed. They were probably better fed than they had ever been in a long time and they wanted more. And Jesus knew just like he knows what is in my heart and your heart. He knew they wanted to make him King. They don't get it! If Jesus becomes king he would have to feed them all the time.—Get out of there. Even if they knew he was a Messiah they had a very narrow view of what a Messiah was going to do. And we have this little side line apparently about the Jewish people and the basket they carried. They carried a little basket with food because if you were Jewish and you ended up in a place where the food wasn't kosher; you wouldn't have to eat defiled food. So the twelve disciples had twelve baskets and they gathered up the fragments. I guess they ate all the fish as there is no mention of fish being left. Maybe it is like Joann said to Bill whose son fixed a catfish fry the other day there was no catfish left there either. So maybe those little pickled sardines; they were so good; they were gone. But there were twelve baskets —often the people left something like a tip, they would leave pieces of bread so the servers would get their share. No need for Tupperware; no need for baggies; no need for freezer paper, they put in their basket and they had food to eat. So that mystery solved. The left overs were gathered into twelve baskets. There were lot of references in the Bible to twelve—the twelve tribes etc but the simplest explanation is the best; the disciples got fed. And Jesus did two things, gathered up the fragments so that nothing would be lost. Keep those two thoughts as we go to the second part of the reading- Nothing would be lost and all the fragments were gathered.

In between these verses, there is the scene of Jesus walking on the water and the question of how Jesus got there----sermons for another time.

John 6:25-40

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?'

"Jesus isn't interested in answering that question-he goes on".

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 have this little conversation about who gave bread in the wilderness-Moses or God".

Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, and 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.'

Then in verse 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. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.' ".I am the Bread of life."

Jesus said, "And whoever eats of this Bread will live forever. And the Bread that gives will be the light of the world is myself." They still could not quite understand him and I can hardly blame them. This is something puzzling words but now as we look back we can understand. This echoes the woman at the well, she said. "Sir give me water that I may never be thirsty and have come back to this well" And then they say,"Give us this bread that we will never be hungry again." He knows their heart and he knows they are going to bamboos very soon. Just like we saw in the story of Nicodemus we are going to see these crowds again. We will see them on Palm Sunday and we'll see them on Good Friday'. Jesus knows their heart although he said that man doesn't live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He also says be fed, he does not want them to be hungry physically but most of all sit down and be served, be blessed and enjoy the food.

What do you want from Jesus during this Lenten Season in this time of reflection? What do you want to learn? What do you want him to give you? More bread? More food? He has a bigger and better plan than anything that you can ever imagine. He took barley loaves which were despised they were the poorest people's bread, the lowest things that you could get—just above Twinkies. Just barely above Twinkies. He multiplied he made barley bread and he multiplied barley bread. He didn't change it into special multi-grain San Francisco bread; he made barley bread out of barley bread. He fed them until they were filled. And it came from a child and was willingly served. Jesus could do the most amazing things in our lives. The Bread of life offers himself as in the Bible Story in Pat's Bible Study on Thursday, Jesus is the" vine and we are the branches. Abide in me and I will abide in you." We will never know completely. God will give us the desires of our heart. There is the desire of the stomach—if you are ever on a diet

and you want a cupcake, just eat the cupcake. If you are going to eat the potato chips, the banana, the multi-bread you are still going to eat a cupcake because that is what you are really hungry for. It is up to us to develop to a spiritual hunger and to allow our inner spirit to be met. It may mean to go to a quiet place and allow our deepest desires to be filled.

Let us pray. We thank you, God for John's record. Thank you that he was an eye witness He had the courage to write and to remember and to tell us what Jesus did and wants for us. Help us now to trust you in all things as we know that you are the one that gives us the Jesus' hunger. Amen