

Hayward United Methodist Church

Pastor Samuel's Message for Tenth Sunday After Pentecost, August 1, 2021

"I Am the Bread of Life"

Text: John 6:24-35

Gospel Reading: John 6:32-35 (NRSV)

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."

Prayer for Illumination (UMH 6)

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

What are you expecting from Jesus? Why do you seek to follow him? Back then, people followed Jesus for many reasons. They heard him preach and teach. They liked the parables or stories he told. The crowd delighted at his teaching. Some people cried out to Jesus to heal them. Jesus heard their cries and healed many who were sick. Some people believed that he would be the King who would redeem the people from political oppression. They thought that he would fight against the Roman government and reestablish the Davidic Kingdom. Some others followed him because he fed more than five thousand people in one occasion and four thousand people in another occasion. Today, people are following Jesus for various reasons. Jesus makes it clear why people should follow him and for what reason.

Last week, we looked at the feeding of five thousand. Jesus fed more than five thousand people out of five loaves and two fish. There were twelve baskets left over. Probably many people carried the left over and brought it to home. The disciples saw scarcity, but Jesus saw abundance. But the story is not over at least

in John's Gospel. The feeding of five thousand leads to a lengthy discourse on bread, manna, and the bread of life. Next day, the crowd came looking for Jesus. when they saw him, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" (Jn 6:25). "Rabbi" is a Hebrew word which means "Teacher." Jesus taught the Kingdom of God on many occasions. He taught with authority derived from God. He interpreted the Jewish Scriptures.

Jesus knew the intention of the crowd. He could read their minds. He said to 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" (Jn 6:26-27). Lots of things are going on here. John chapter 6 is full of insights and wisdom. I encourage you to read the entire chapter and meditate on what God is speaking to you.

Jesus is engaged in dialogue with the crowd. Of course, Jesus is engaged in dialogue with individuals in John's Gospel, such as Nicodemus, the Samaritan Woman, Martha and Mary. It is easier to have conversation with individuals than with a large crowd. Here it is more than five thousand people. It is good that the crowd came looking for Jesus so that they would understand the implications of the miracle he performed. Jesus took this opportunity to teach what it means to receive the bread that he offers.

First, Jesus and the crowd are talking about the bread that was given to the people of Israel in the wilderness. The crowd was still demanding that Jesus offers a sign or a miracle so that they would believe that he came from God. Jesus did perform a sign which is feeding the five thousand. Probably the crowd wanted another feeding and another feeding, almost every day. The crowd referred to the manna event in the Old Testament. The story of manna is found in Exodus chapter 16. 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'" (Exod 16:12). Manna was like a bread that God gave them from heaven. It didn't last forever. People still became hungry.

Jesus knew that the crowd needed a bread that would satisfy them forever. Even though the Israelites ate manna that came down from heaven, they were still

hungry. The miracle did not last for long time. People had to find other means to satisfy their hunger. Here, Jesus draws a sharp contrast between manna and the bread that Jesus offers. Manna came down from heaven. Jesus also came down from heaven. Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish as he gave thanks to God who is in heaven. The earthly bread couldn't satisfy their eternal hunger. People needed more than the earthly bread.

Jesus told the crowd plainly, "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (Jn 6:33). This bread that Jesus talks about will give life to the whole world. The whole world will receive this eternal bread if they had faith in Jesus. This is a free gift offered to all. But the crowd was still thinking in earthly terms. They thought that Jesus will hand over them another loaf of bread so that they can take it home and eat it and have no hunger. So the crowd said to Jesus, "Sir, give us this bread always" (Jn 6:34). The crowd knew that the loaf they ate was not sufficient for next day. They wanted to eat the bread everyday so that they will not come to Jesus again. They wanted a loaf of bread to take home.

People come to Jesus with different expectations. They even interpret Jesus's teachings differently. But Jesus in John's Gospel draws attention to heavenly things. Jesus was sent by God to offer life eternal. Jesus came to invite people to heavenly things that would last forever. But still people continue to misunderstand Jesus's teachings and his very life.

Second, Jesus refers to himself as the bread of life. Jesus makes one of the profound statements in John's Gospel. He 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" (Jn 6:35). Jesus offers himself as the bread of life. In fact, Jesus was telling that crowd that they should take him home instead of earthly bread. Jesus died on the cross to bring eternal life. He rose again to show that God raises the dead to new life. Jesus came to feed us with bread that lasts into eternity.

The food Jesus offers is himself. He is the bread that is broken given to the world for life eternal. He is the bread that sustains the world leading unto eternity. This is the bread that satisfies all our hunger. Communion reminds of the body and blood of Christ given to the world. As we partake of the communion, we participate in the very life of Jesus. As Jesus became the bread of life, we too are

invited to be the transmitters of the bread of life. We are called to show the sacrificial love through our lives. Christ invites us to show to the people that Jesus is the bread of life.

As Jesus offered himself as the bread of life, he gives us the same offer. He wants to come to our life and satisfy our hunger and thirst. He is the heavenly food sent by God. People look for worldly things to satisfy their hunger and thirst. They keep trying. They end up with earthly things, not heavenly things. They are disappointed in life and never find inner satisfaction. Ordinary bread satisfied for a day. But Jesus satisfies eternally.

The apostle Paul tried everything in life. But there was a puzzle piece missing. The missing piece was Christ Jesus. He makes this bold statement: "Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:7-8). He was willing to give up everything for the sake of Christ. He learned that it is Christ who provides the life of God. What are you expecting from Jesus? Are you seeking something that will satisfy your life? Jesus offers more than earthly bread. He offers his very life so that you will find permanent satisfaction here on earth and eternal life in the world to come. God Bless.

Pastor Samuel

Let's say the Benediction together:
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with us all. Amen.