



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

July 29, 2018

With Jesus --- The Bread of Life

John 6:1-21

Two weeks out of preaching; grateful for the time; some rest and reset; preparation and the assurance that you were well cared for with the ministry of Pastor Hoffman.

But, for now, back to our common theme of "Growing Forward" as one people, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit who is generous and never lets us down, building us up on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ whose vision of the Church sounds like this---

"I chose you and appointed you," says the Lord, "to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." (John 15:16)

Words spoken in the Upper Room, in Jerusalem as Jesus prepared the disciples for His final Passover, celebration of freedom for the Jewish people.

In a time, when the events of John 6 were but a memory, but a very potent one! Let's go there...

Setting the Table: John's Gospel was written over 80 years from the death and resurrection of Jesus --- in 115 AD/Common Era.

It would seem that the congregation was a family circle, strong and faithful in ministry, challenges and opportunities, some reduction in members with changing time, but in place to build and grow as those who carried forward the good news of Jesus, next generation Christians who had witnessed, heard, believed that Jesus was the One sent from God.

In a sense, I hold that John's Gospel is the "Genesis" of the New Testament. A little like the words, "In the beginning God created," but mediated by the trust that the One who was in the beginning was the "Word made flesh, the One in whom the disciples gathered around then and today---chosen and appointed to bear fruit.

John 6 is a turning point. Note the words: success in mission "because of the signs" as Jesus "went up" the mountain and sat with the 12---a teacher with purpose, to equip his own because "the Passover, THE Festival of the Jewish people was coming up." Fair warning: CROSS ON THE HORIZON.

The Crowds...Disciple's Dilemma: As in any time, the followers were about to face a dilemma. By 115 the followers of Jesus were growing, near exponentially for the time. And in a time of growth, when things are swell, things can go to (hell), well, SOUTH.

And crowds...as Jesus looks out...they were coming towards him with expectations---more signs, more words...who knows for sure, but the leaders had an issue---the crowds were hungry---no Whole Foods, Uber Eats, or catering to meet the need of so many. So, Jesus engages His team! And I bet they didn't make eye contact☺

Philip...Andrew...a boy...each of us --- Fed: So, what to do? A little workshop on trust: "Philip. What's the plan?" Note: Jesus knew what he himself was going to do.

Philip: "It would take thousands to buy enough food." Pretty human response from the platform of scarcity!

Andrew: "A boy has five loaves of barley bread and two fish. But, what are they in the face of this?" (Tiny bites! Scarcity!) {One teacher notes that "Philip is technically correct, but faithfully a bust." Frederick Dale Bruner}

And as the hearers, we begin to get the purpose in this story of the Feeding of the 5000, the only miracle of Jesus that appears in all four gospels, but John spins it to remind that strength is found in the Meal. Sounds a little like the Lord's Table, Holy Communion.

Jesus said: "Seat them." 5000 MEN. Who counted!? Unlike the first three gospels, where the disciples distributed the food, Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks.

And "he distributed them," (with the fish) as much as they wanted (No scarcity, fear of running out, not enough.) And when they were satisfied, filled, fulfilled, he said to the disciples "Pick up the leftovers." Good stewardship and nothing was lost. Overflow! 12 whole baskets. With Jesus, life in Christ today too, is about receiving and believing! Don't miss that!

Who do you trust?...Prophet...King...Who is Jesus Christ for YOU? What would have been, is your response to the story? Who do you trust? What do you believe? How do we receive?

Some people came closer. The Prophet! Expectations. Like a friend who said, "I finally get Jesus, He was a really good teacher." Close, but...and some wanted to retail Jesus as king and he split. Never to be an idol, this Jesus and now all alone! Evening.

On Board with Jesus --- Safe! Disciples get ready to sail back to their first place of calling. Jesus was MIA. Note that the boat may be a symbol of "the church."

Time change; transition and renewal: great winds, rough sailing. (3 or 4 miles☺)

And, there is Jesus! Right there when you need Him! And He just brings a word or two, about all you need, and stills fear, doubt, anxiety---"I AM, I AM, don't be terrified, afraid." The GREAT I AM, which means "I am GOD." No bread king, cheap fix, or spiritual bandage." "EGO, EMI, God"

They are safe and He meets them at their destination. It is as if there are three miracles in 21 verses: 1) He feeds---sacrament, 2) He speaks---Word, and 3) He meets them at their destination with assurance that, in Christ, they are safe! Leaning on the everlasting arms!

Moving on in Mission with One Another --- Growing Forward in the Spirit. I have heard it often, the words, "We live in uncertain times." Or, "if we only." Or, can we just be the way that we were in the good old days."

The Church has always live in uncertain times, discipleship is never about the way we were OR the good old, (Were they really!) days.

John 6 is a way station of renewal on the way to the Cross then and now. For in the Cross of Christ alone we find our redemption, our lives bathed in God's love, and purposed with the Holy Spirit to move out, to move on, to meet Jesus in the world and at the ends of our days.

In these three weeks, John 6 is teaching at the launching pad of worship. For here are the three places where our lives are about mission, with a vision to be the people of God: Worship, Discipleship, Outreach which is local, global and courageously intentional!

And our responsibility is to receive Jesus' services, in His Person as the One sent from God to us, for us, for all the world, in His Word, His Meal, in the family circle we share in the Body of Christ.

Jesus comes to us and calls us to come to Him. For today, we are about believing and receiving; to be with Jesus, the Bread of Life and with one another. Next week, the question will be "What, then, must we do, be doing that we are actually doing the work of God?"

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