

## Sermon for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

**John 6:35, 41-51**

**Glory to You, O Lord**

<sup>35</sup>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. <sup>41</sup>Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup>They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" <sup>43</sup>Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. <sup>46</sup>Not that anyone has **seen** the Father except the one who is from God; he has **seen** the Father. <sup>47</sup>Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to You, O Christ**

Gracious Savior, living Word, Bread from heaven, you are the bearer of life for your people. Help us to see you as God sees you so that we can believe. Help us to see each other as God sees us so that we can love the way you have taught us to love. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

Our Gospel reading for today leaves out a few verses between the first verse that ended our Gospel for last week and provides a bridge to our reading today. We can learn much from the verses that are left out and those are as follows: I am going to read them and I invite you to close your eyes and listen carefully for a word or a phrase jumps out at you

*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."*

Is there a word that jumps out of what I just read? (wait for a response)

The word for me is seen in the first verse and see in the last one. Jesus talks to the crowd about being seen but yet those who see do not believe. In the last verse he reiterates that those who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life.

What gets in the way of us seeing people clearly? I remember having a conversation with a homeless man once and he said that the hardest thing about being homeless was being invisible to others. People would walk right by him and the others who were there with him and wouldn't even look down or engage them in eye contact - almost as if I don't see you, you don't exist and I don't have to feel guilty about not giving you money or acknowledging that something may be wrong with the world in which we live. It is a world where some have much and many have little. Some are

highly visible; the world is their stage and others are invisible, just waiting for some acknowledgment of their existence.

What gets in the way of us seeing Jesus clearly? Does Jesus live up to our expectations? Have we made Jesus into some kind of heavenly vending machine to dole out what we want when we offer up our itemized prayer before bedtime? How do we see Jesus clearly? How do we clear away the clutter around us to really focus on Jesus and who Jesus is in our life? Do we value the time we spend in prayer? in worship? Do we allow the time we spend with Jesus in prayer to change us? So many questions to ponder. Occasionally I need to stop and think about how I set my priorities.

Jesus is not seen for who he is because he does not fit the image of the Messiah they were expecting. They saw him literally as a poor carpenter, the son of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth. The Messiah would never come from Nazareth, would he? Those in the crowd with the Scribes and Pharisees could not see Jesus as the Son of God, as the I am, as the Messiah, because they were expecting someone far more remarkable and outstanding, regal maybe. Because they cannot see him for who he is, they cannot believe that he is who he says he is.

Now to confuse things a little, we layer on the image of Jesus as the bread of life. The crowd is confused because the only bread they can imagine coming down from heaven is the manna their ancestors received in the wilderness. Why does Jesus think he can be compared to the miracle of manna? Who does he think he is?

Unlike the manna in the wilderness that fed them for a time, Jesus is the Bread of Life that feeds them for all time. Jesus is the connection between us and God - he is the Word of God that nourishes and fills us. Jesus is the one sent by God, He is the one

God uses to teach the world. Jesus is at the center, not us, and sometimes that is hard for us to remember.

I think of the picture of Adam and God on the roof of the Sistine Chapel, painted by Michelangelo. Adam is lying down with his hand casually flung over his knee and it is God stretching his body to reach Adam, to touch him, to build a deep and abiding relationship with his creation. Adam seems not to care - but lucky for us, God cares deeply, and completely, and will continue.

God reaches out to us, over and over, to provide what we need, be it manna and quail from heaven, water from a rock, a land of milk and honey or finally God's own Son, taking on our humanity to save us from ourselves. God spreads a table of abundance with Jesus, the Bread of salvation and Jesus voluntarily gives up his own flesh to give us eternal life.

We just have to believe!!

Just as we need to see Jesus clearly, deeply, honestly in order to believe he is who he says he is, we need to hear Jesus as the Word of God who gives life, sustains life and draws us to God. Are we listening? One of my favorite hymns is Listen, God is calling.

Listen, listen God is calling, through the Word inviting,  
offering forgiveness, comfort and joy.

What a gift! God doesn't give up but calls, invites, forgives and loves unconditionally! God seeks us out, reaches out to draw us close, raises us up and teaches us how to live as God's children. It is God's action that compels us to react, if we just listen.

What gets in the way of us listening to the Word, of wading into the word for a deeper dive and a more refreshing dip? I think of Charlie

Brown's teacher in the background "wa wa wa wawawa wa wa!" There is so much distracting sound in our ears fighting for equal time that we often drown out the voice of Jesus until he says what he said to the religious officials in vs. 43 "Do not complain among yourselves"- effectively saying, "shut up and listen! You are not understanding me. You are hearing my words as they whip past your ears but you are not attending to my Word. You are not listening deeply! How do we listen deeply? How do we shut out the world when we can't find one more minute that someone else doesn't need us to do something?

Its like this - others will take all that you give them and keep looking for more. If you step in to fix things, they will back up and let you. It is far easier than arguing with you. If you firmly set boundaries on your time so that you can give your soul a chance to regroup in prayer, others will complain. They will keep complaining until they realize you are serious and then they will do it themselves, their way and you will have time to pray and pay attention to your relationship with the one who is the most important.

We hear in vs. 40 "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." God draws us to Jesus so that we may see and believe. God teaches us through the ministry of Jesus to listen closely to the Word and modify our lives accordingly with the power of the Holy Spirit. We can do none of this on our own but wholly rely on Jesus, the Bread of life, who offers what we so desperately need, nourishment, grace and love unending! Praise God, Amen and Amen!