

I am the Bread of Life

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost) is John 6:22-35. This reading follows Jesus' feeding the 5000 and his walking on water. A thread that can be seen in those narratives is that neither the disciples nor the crowds that follow Jesus really get who he is or why he came to earth.

They saw Jesus as someone who might bring back the power and glory of Israel and who would in the meantime provide for all of their physical needs. Jesus affirms that they have already seen a number of "signs." Faith in Jesus was the purpose of all the signs. At the miraculous feeding, the crowds saw only the gift, not the Giver.

People can eat only a certain amount of food, and they usually need less than they eat. In the hot Mediterranean climate without modern refrigeration, food would not keep long at all. So Jesus warned the people not to focus all their energies on getting the "food that spoils, but...food that endures to eternal life.

They missed the point that eternal life is Christ's gift and were thinking in terms of achieving it by pious works. Jesus explains to them and us that the work of God is to believe in Christ whom the Father sent. Faith is the only thing needful and it is a gift from God.

They continue to be obtuse and speak of Moses as the one who gave them manna in the wilderness. Jesus counters this by pointing out that it was God who provided the manna and not Moses. It seems that in verse 34 they have finally understood when they ask for this bread. However, they think that Jesus is speaking only of physical bread.

At this point Jesus becomes clear and emphatic. "Do you understand? I am the bread of life. If you receive me by faith, you will have eternal life. You will be in a loving, saving relationship with me and with My Father. And, that relationship will never end. Even death will not end it. We have this bread in the Scriptures that God has given to us and to the whole world. We have the privilege of eating from it every day. We can never overeat on this spiritual food.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for patiently teaching when we don't get what you offer us. Forgive us for that and help us to continue to learn from your Word. Amen