

PENTECOST 11
EXODUS 16:2-4, 9-15
EPHESIANS 4:1-16
JOHN 6:24-35
AUGUST 4, 5, 2018

YEAR B

The people were still searching. They had their fill of food as they ate from the five loaves and two fish. They experienced the meal as Jesus used the sack lunch from a boy. Jesus prayed and there was more than enough to go around. There were 12 baskets of leftovers. Jesus took care of their physical needs. They were hungry for food and Jesus fed them. He fed them in the same way God blessed their ancestors in the wilderness so many years before. God blessed the Israelites by sharing bread and meat to sustain God's people as they traveled to the Promised Land.

The people were searching for Jesus in the same way their ancestors searched for God. They searched but they wanted Jesus to fit their mold. They wanted Jesus to meet their needs in ways they could control. They wanted to know when Jesus got to the other side and possibly now he got there. They wanted to know about this bread and how they would receive it. Their ancestors in the wilderness also sought to control how God would lead them and care for them. They sought to mold God into their image instead of being molded in God's image. Our Lord cared for the people but gave them more than they expected. Jesus fed them with physical food but also with spiritual food that came in the way of his words and his message.

Exodus 16:4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not."

God has always cared for God's people. In the wilderness the Israelites were searching for many things. They were learning how to live in freedom after centuries of being slaves of the Egyptians. They were searching for a right relationship with God. This often came in the form of wandering from God in

favor of golden calves and other idols of stone and wood. The Israelites were searching for food to eat. When they were hungry they had a difficult time finding God. Even when they wandered away God was close by. When they questioned God's faithfulness God remained faithful. When they were hungry God gave them bread.

Hungry people have a difficult time learning the message of God's salvation. They have a difficult time coming to faith and doing the Lord's work when they are physically hungry. Their hunger sometimes comes with searching for ways to heal diseases. Sometimes it comes when there is not enough money to go around. For most of us there is not the worry of knowing where the next meal comes from but there are concerns in our lives that would make our view cloudy making it difficult to see Jesus. We have heard many times that God is with us in our times of need. We know God's promises that God gives us what we need and gives it at the right time. It does not matter the age of the person when it comes to searching for the Lord and being fed by God. When we search for God we will find God but quite often the search comes along with being fed with physical food.

John 6:28, 29 Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Those that followed Jesus to the other side of the sea were searching for Jesus. Jesus perceived that they were looking for more food to eat. They were looking for physical healing and they were looking to have demons cast out. Jesus had taken care of their physical needs but now was the time for the next step. Now was the time for Jesus to teach them the truth about God and about the Bread of Life. The people came looking for food and Jesus gave them so much more. Jesus gave them life and he gave them direction. When they asked what they needed to do to receive this bread Jesus told them to believe in the One that sent Jesus. They were to believe in God and to believe in Jesus who is the Son

of God. They must continue to grow in faith. They would grow in faith by continuing to listen to the truth from God's word. Later in John 6 the crowds would start leaving because the message was too difficult. It could also be that the message did not meet with their approval so they started to wander away.

At the church we get lots of requests for assistance with everything from groceries to rent and utilities. When people call they usually want something physical. They want money. We have given assistance at various times. When I get second and third requests for assistance I usually offer more than what they were looking for. I begin to teach them about the Lord. Some endure the teaching in the hopes that I will give them what they came for. Most would rather not hear the teaching I give. Some stop calling when I move to a more spiritual level. The same would happen with Jesus. Those experiencing the physical things from Jesus would eventually drop out when Jesus got too spiritual.

John 6:31-33 **Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'** ³²**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. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**

When the Jews asked what they needed to do to do the works of God Jesus told them they needed to believe. They needed to believe in God and believe in Jesus. Our Lord would repeat those words several times in the Gospel of John. Jesus talked about being the Way and the Truth and the Life. He taught about receiving living water and living in the resurrection. Jesus was patient as he taught and as he cared for the people. He taught them the truth from the word of God. They needed to understand that it was not Moses that provided manna in the wilderness. It was not Moses that brought water from a rock or provided quail every evening. The same God that fed the 5000 also fed their ancestors with manna and quail. Moses was merely the vessel of God's love. God worked

through Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. Moses led by the hand of God. God sustained the people in the wilderness. Jesus is the bread of life that came from heaven. Jesus is the true bread that sustains our lives.

John 6:35 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.

My task is not to give life but to give you what the Lord has given me to share. I cannot give anyone life and I cannot make anyone believe that Jesus is the Christ. I am not the bread of life that came down from heaven. I am God's servant that serves the meal and cares for the people. It is God that feeds the hungry and casts out demons. It is God through Jesus Christ that heals the sick and remains close to us in our times of trouble. To do the will of God is to believe in God. If we believe in God, we will also do what the Lord asks us to do. Physical things are important. We must never neglect them, but the more important part is believing in God and coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord. AMEN