

Pentecost 12 8/12/18
John 6:35-51 14B

OUR SERMON TEXT FOR IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON FOR THIS SUNDAY.

Inquiring minds want to know: What did pastor do on vacation? So, I'll tell you. Among other things, we went to the State Fair, where we attended several of the country concerts at the fair. I emphasize "country" concerts because at each of those concerts, the artist did a "classic" country song, which meant a song from the 1990's, like Garth or Travis. I know I'm going to sound like a grumpy old man, but that's not classic country. The 1990's. That's like my lifetime. Classic country – that's like Hank, and Buck and the man in black himself. And I know this because I grew up where we had both kinds of music – country and western.

Yes, we had a great time. Enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. But, that little part of the concerts failed to meet pastor's expectations. The best way I have ever heard expectations explained is that EXPECTATIONS are the PLAYGROUND of the devil and do we see that in our lesson this morning. The crowd in our lesson had an expectation of Jesus, then were quite surprised, even disappointed, when He did not meet their expectation.

These were the people that Jesus had fed with the loaves and fish. They followed Him to Capernaum, because they "ate their fill of the loaves." Jesus then taught them that He is the Bread of Life "who came down from heaven" and everyone who has faith in Him has eternal life.

What was their reaction to these words of Jesus? Our Gospel lesson for this Sunday begins with the crowd's reaction to these words of Jesus,

So the Jews grumbled about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

They grumbled because they were not content with Jesus. They had expectations of the Messiah, what He would be and what He would do for them. But, when He came, He turned out to be different than what they expected. They wanted bread for their stomachs for today, but Jesus wanted to give them life, eternal life, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes

to Me shall not hunger (v. 35).”

“At this the Jews began to grumble about him!” They grumbled! Jesus wanted to give to them the greatest treasure we can have -- life, eternal life. And, what did they do? Did they eat? Did they believe? Did they rejoice and give thanks for this Bread of Life God had given them? No. They grumbled because they had no faith. They rejected Jesus and did not believe.

What is the 9th Commandment?

What is the 10th Commandment?

9th: You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.

10th: You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What is God teaching us in these Commandments? Contentment. Coveting is an unholy desire for what God has entrusted to your neighbor or for something that God has forbidden you to have or to want. God calls upon us to be content with the possessions He has entrusted to us. God has made us who we are and what we are in Christ, and He wants us to be content with what He knows is best for us.

But, we are not. We are not content. In the grumbling of the crowd, we see ourselves, don’t we? How often do we grumble when God doesn’t do for us the things that we want Him to do?

When illness, or tragedy strikes; when we have marriage or child problems; when we do not have enough pay check to buy all the toys our hearts desire, our first thought is not to fear, love, and trust in God above all things, but to grumble. When God works in a way that is difficult or trying for us, when God’s Word seems impossible to believe and trust, we reject God and His will and His truth. The unbelief of our flesh tells us that Jesus doesn’t love us and that He cannot possibly care for us because He doesn’t work the way we want Him to.

God gives and gives and gives ... and we are not content. When God doesn’t meet our expectations, we grumble. And, grumbling is really and

truly a weakness of faith.

But, the Good News for us is that Jesus is “the living bread that came down from heaven.” And, He gave His flesh for the life of the world upon the cross. Upon the cross, the very Son of God was sacrificed so that we would be forgiven of all our sins against the 9th and 10th Commandments and all the other Commandments.

“If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever,” Jesus said. “To eat” means to believe, to have faith, in Him. In the new birth of our baptism, God gives us faith, and, with that faith, we cling, hope, and trust in Christ alone.

Faith does not grumble but rejoices in the Father and the Son. We trust in God’s most comforting promise, “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all -- how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things (Ro 8)?”

The Christian life is the life of repentance. Every day, we struggle in our faith to overcome our doubts, our fears, our wants, to trust that God will always open His hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

Like Elijah in our Old Testament reading. Elijah was called by God to be a prophet during the reign of King Ahab. Ahab, the Bible tells us, “did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him (1 Ki 16).”

As a sign of judgment upon their worship of false gods and to show that He truly is the Living God, God caused a great drought to appear. In order that his life would be spared during the drought, God instructed Elijah to flee and “ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.” Later, God told him to go to Zarephath, where he had fed a widow. When her son died, Elijah raised him to life again.

God then instructed Elijah to return to Ahab. Elijah set up a contest between the Lord God and Baal. Again and again, the false prophets of Baal called upon their god to burn the appointed sacrifices with fire, but nothing happened. Then, Elijah stepped forward and prayed to God and “the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering” and the altar

upon which it laid. "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, 'The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.'" And, they slaughtered the false prophets and a great rain fell upon the land.

Then begins the words of our Old Testament lesson. Ahab told his wicked wife, Jezebel, all that Elijah had done. So, she threatened Elijah's life. What did Elijah do in the face of her threat? He "was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life."

He had been fed and strengthened by God. He had saw with his own eyes and tasted with his own mouth the goodness of God. But, when the going got tough, Elijah got going.

Elijah sat down and cried, "Why me, Lord? What have I ever done? Take my life. I know better than you what's best for me. I'm smarter than you, God." What was God's answer to Elijah's prayer? He fed him and strengthened him and gave him safety and preserved his life.

We learn from Elijah. The cross reminds us that God does not punish us. The cross reminds us that God does not want us to die, but live. We can look back to our baptism and be reminded that we are God's own child. We can recall all the promises of God to us in His Word. We can remember how every time we came to the Lord's Table to eat and drink our Lord Christ's body and blood, we were forgiven and strengthened to fight the good fight of the faith. We remember that God has given us the gift of life and gives us food and clothing, home and family, work and play, and all that we need for our bodies and life every day. Yes, we can rejoice and be glad in them.

Truly, we can rejoice and give thanks that God opens His hand satisfies the desire of every living thing with the Bread of Life, that we may eat and not die, and with our daily bread for today.
Amen.