

The Eight Sunday after Trinity YEAR B July 26, 2015

The Lectionary moves from Mark's Gospel to a journey through John Chapter 6 for the next few weeks. In the Old Testament semi-continuous readings we remain with David for the time being. This week, the question of faith becomes the focus as we contrast David's lustful self-interest with the faith of Jesus in feeding the crowds and appearing to the disciples in the storm. The challenging question that this week's readings raise is this: What will be the driving force of our lives – faithful trust in God's ways, our own self-interest. It sounds like an easy choice to make, but the realities of our daily lives show how hard it can be.

May our worship encourage us in faith and give us the strength and courage to faithfully trust the ways of God's Reign this week. For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

INTRODUCTIONS

2 Samuel 11 : 1-15

Our weekly story of King David continues with the affair of Bathsheba. The Bible is often very honest about the failings of its heroes, and tells us here that Israel's greatest king was guilty of adultery and murder.

or **2 Kings 4 : 42-44**

This brief account of a miraculous meal makes us think of Jesus feeding the crowds. Elisha took a small quantity of bread and grain, and God made it more than enough for a hundred people.

Psalm 14: Those who are foolish and wicked say that there is no God, and God sees how society has become corrupt. But, God is with the righteous who are "eaten up" by the wicked, and will save Israel, leading the people to rejoice.

OR Psalm 145:10-18: God's people bless God and give thanks to God, telling everyone about God's power and glory, and God's everlasting Reign, because God is trustworthy and supports, provides for, and rescues all who call out to God.

Ephesians 3 : 14-21

Paul's theme in this letter is the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church, acting as Christ's body. He has expressed his joy that the Christians of Ephesus are fellow-citizens with all Jewish believers, and is now moved to prayer and praise.

John 6 : 1-21

For a few Sundays now, we interrupt the sequence from Mark, and hear John's teaching about bread - bread as necessary daily food and Jesus himself as bread from heaven, food of eternal life. It begins with the miraculous feeding of the five thousand.

Click here to view the readings

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=2%20Samuel%2011:%201-15%0A%20BOR%0A2%20Kings%204:%2042-44%20%0Acw%20Psalm%2014%0A%20BOR%0Acw%20Psalm%20145:%2010-19%0AEphesians%203:%2014-21%0AJohn%206:%201-21

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

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O God,
whose never-failing providence ordereth all things
both in heaven and earth;
We humbly beseech thee to put away from us
all hurtful things,
and to give us those things which be profitable for us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Blessed are you, O Lord,
and blessed are those who observe and keep your law:
Help us to seek you with our whole heart,
to delight in your commandments
and to walk in the glorious liberty
given us by your Son, Jesus Christ.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Heavenly Father, caller of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, both workers of miracles, give us ears to hear your messengers who trust in you, knowing you will satisfy our every need.
Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Like King David, Lord God, the sins of our passion often live after us with endless consequences. Yet, you still use us, love us, forgive us and let us be your people.
Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Loving God, as you open wide your hands to satisfy our every need, open our hearts in gratitude toward you, and love toward one another.
Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Holy Spirit, give us the wisdom of the Psalmist who knows to look for you, for every goodness, every deliverance, every tomorrow.
Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Lord Jesus Christ, your love surpasses human knowledge, for it is higher, holier, wiser, and more beautiful than human words can describe.
Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

Lord Jesus, ever present in our next meal, and in our next rescue, open our eyes to see you always present with us. Hear, now, our prayers for others _____.
Loving God, you hear our prayers: **You live among us.**

The love of God has won. The new life has begun. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Presider or deacon

As we prepare to eat the meal of Jesus, let us pray for all who are tossed in the storms of life.

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Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

Lord, have mercy.

For mercy, justice, and peace in the world.

Lord, have mercy.

For farmers and a good harvest, for travelers and those on vacation, and for safety from violent storms.

Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the dying, the poor and the oppressed, prisoners and captives, and for their families.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For ourselves, our families, our companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Father of glory, hear the prayers we offer you this day, strengthen us with your Spirit, and let your Son dwell in our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Strengthen for service, Lord,
the hands that holy things have taken;
may the ears which have heard your word
be deaf to clamour and dispute;
may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit;
may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love
shine with the light of hope;
and may the bodies which have been fed with your body
be refreshed with the fulness of your life;
glory to you for ever.

PRAYERS

www.churchnewsireland.org

Thematic

O God,
sustain us in the complexity of our humanity
as you sustained David--
playing the harp of youth,
throwing stones at giant problems,
loving our friends beyond wisdom,
dancing worship,
mourning children,
breaking our hearts in psalms, and
longing for warmth in our old bones. Amen.

Intercessory

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.

Intercessions may be made, concluding with:

Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.

Intercessions may be made, concluding with:

Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.

Intercessions may be made, concluding with:

Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being

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and willingly share the concerns of our neighbors. Amen.

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.

Intercessions may be made, concluding with:

Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.

Intercessions may be made, concluding with:

Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.

Intercessions may be made, concluding with:

Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,

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who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.

Intercessions may be made, concluding with:

Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Scripture

In your compassionate love, O God,
you nourish us with the words of life and bread of blessing.
Grant that Jesus may calm our fears
and move our hearts to praise your goodness
by sharing our bread with others. Amen.

Sustainer of the hungry,
like a mother you long to feed your children
until each is satisfied.
Turn our eyes to you alone,
that, aware of our own deepest longings,
we will reach out with Christ
to feed others with the miracle of your love. Amen.

Offertory

Generous God, forgive us for the fear and lack of trust that allow us to see scarcity where you have provided abundance. We don't want to be like the disciples by the Sea of Galilee who saw only problems and not possibilities. We would choose instead to be like the boy who, in faith, took all he had and made it available to Jesus to do something miraculous. We offer these gifts to you with confidence that you will work to multiply what we offer into overflowing baskets of blessings in abundance. We pray this in gratitude for the greatest gift of all, your Son, our Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen. (*John 6:1-21*)

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

2 Samuel 11:1-15:

- Uh-oh. Things were going so well. Then David saw Bathsheba. Today we get part one of this story of temptation and sin. What tempts you? When have you given into temptation? What do you think makes you take that 'plunge' into committing a sin you know you shouldn't?
- Poor Uriah is the big loser all around in all of this. Cheated on, by the king. Tricked. Murdered.
- No where in the story when David is having Uriah set up does someone question his intention/authority. No doubt, people would fear questioning the king. Still,

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wasn't their someone who could step in and ask David what he was thinking? Could you question authority in a way that would bring risk to yourself?

Psalm 14:

- "Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' [Chris Haslam](#), my first stop for quality exegesis, says that this verse doesn't indicate *atheism* for the *fools*, but those who doubt that God actually cares about human affairs and behaviors. A lot of fools today, eh?
- "There is not one who does good, no, not one." This statement is perhaps exaggerated, or, if not, at least *extreme*, unless only in the sense that we are all sinners. But it reminds me of the quote from Augustine: "If we have understood, than what we have understood is not God." Likewise, we are not good, not even one of us, because God is good. If God is good, we are only a shadow of that...
- I wonder about the context of this psalm - the psalmist seems to have something very specific in mind - specific folks upon whom the psalmist wants God's 'terror' poured.

Ephesians 3:14-21:

- "rooted and grounded in love" Great imagery. Roots run deep underground, and are often invisible above the earth, except in bits. And yet, though they often look fragile, compared to the thing they give root to, they are essential for the livelihood of the plant/tree. What are your roots made of and grounded in?
- "breadth and length, and height and depth" - just more great imagery.
- "surpasses knowledge" - In today's age, it is hard for us to deal with things that surpass knowledge. I know personally I like to have all the answers to everything. Can we accept that God's love for us is so great that we truly can't 'get it' all?

John 6:1-21:

- This text begins a month-long series of texts from John 6 that all talk about Jesus and bread and feeding and bread of life and living water, etc., etc. The imagery is rich and meaningful and can communicate a great deal. On the flip side, I remember preaching on these texts three years ago when I was just starting at my first appointment, and wondering if I would ever get to talk about something other than bread!
- "he said this to" - I always worry when the gospel writers try to explain why Jesus said something. Do they really know, or are they giving us their own guesses?
- Feeding so many, by magical multiplication or by a generous stirring of hearts of the crowds is truly a miracle, given that so many go without.
- "But what are they among so many people?" How often, like Peter, do we look at what we've got and see only "not enough" to be worthwhile? We, in our abundant society, live like we have a culture of scarcity.
- The people follow Jesus wherever he goes. Today, it seems only movie stars have such command of a crowd, and our attention. Who today are you willing to follow? Really?
- "do not be afraid." A phrase so often communicated to us by God through the scriptures. We need these words.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

This week's readings offer us a startling contrast. On the one hand, there are the familiar stories of God's provision. In the related Old Testament passage, Elijah feeds a crowd with small rations, and in the Gospel reading from John, Jesus does the same with a much larger crowd – possibly because the generosity and faith of one small boy led to greater sharing and mutual care from the entire group. Furthermore, as the disciples wrestle in the storm, their fear is removed when they know the presence of Jesus, and they are able to find their way back to land safely. In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds the believers of God's provision and grace, and prays that they may learn to grasp how abundant God's love is, and that they allow this knowledge to strengthen them and open them to God's life within them. These narratives of God's grace and provision are echoed in Psalm 145 where God is praised as the trustworthy one. On the other hand, there is the story of David's lust and deception. The infamous story of his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband speaks loudly of the consequences that result when we move away from trust in God's grace and God's ways, and begin to operate from our own self-interest. Although God had given David everything he could have desired, in his unfaithfulness and selfishness, it was not enough, and so he took things into his own hands and brought tragedy on others and (as we will see next week) himself.

The focus, then, of this the Lectionary this week, is on learning to trust in God's grace and God's ways, and learning to live out of that faith in every choice, every decision and every moment. It's a timely word, since so much suffering is caused when we operate from fear, lust, greed and self-sufficiency. Faith in God's ways and God's gracious presence may sound naive and impractical, but, when we take the risk and live as faithful followers of Christ, we discover that the principles of God's Reign really are the best way to live.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: There are tremendous challenges facing our world, and there are millions of people working daily to address these challenges. However, so much of our work for justice and peace is motivated by fear, or by the sense that it all depends on us alone. And so much of our work is plagued by the influence, or direct resistance, of interest and lobby groups. When it comes to dealing with the very real crises of our world, faith may feel like the most irrelevant thing, but without it we risk missing one of the most important resources and guiding principles at our disposal. Human wisdom and self-sufficiency drove David's destructive lust. Human wisdom inspired Philip's incredulous question about where food could be obtained to feed the crowds. But, when the values of God's Reign are brought into play, we can truly believe in a different way, which often leads to surprising solutions to our problems. When a crowd is hungry, faith means that a boy's lunch can be the catalyst that ensures that everyone is fed – most likely through the simple miracle of sharing. When the disciples face a storm alone, their fear threatens to sink them, but when they realise that Jesus is with them, they find the way to land safely. These narratives may be interpreted miraculously or not, but either way the principle remains: the miracle of God's Reign is that we begin to believe that we can feed crowds, we can navigate storms and we can discover ways to live that liberate us from the prisons of our own self-interest, lust, and self-sufficiency. The key challenge this week, then, is to risk believing in God's Reign enough that we embrace its values as the primary driving force of our lives, and as the guiding principle for addressing the crises of our times.

LOCAL APPLICATION: In every life a choice must be made in which we decide the principles that will guide us. In our relationships, our neighbourhoods, our communities, our work and play we can choose to allow our own self-interest to be primary or we can

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trust that following the ways of God's Reign truly do lead us to life. The challenge is that we would love to believe that following Jesus guarantees prosperity, health and safety, but this is not what this week's readings promise. Rather, we are offered a vision of God's grace and presence that calls to the grace and compassion within us. We are shown, through David's story, what can happen when we turn our backs on faithfulness, integrity and self-restraint, and we are challenged, through the Gospel story, to believe that generosity and trust really can help us to enjoy shared abundance and navigate the storms that we will inevitably face. One of the tragedies of the contemporary church is that we have failed to live the faith we proclaim. Where we have spoken about forgiveness and grace, we have been vindictive and condemning. Where we have spoken about trust and generosity, we have been greedy and stingy. Where we have spoken about courage and integrity, we have been fearful and cowardly. If the world is to believe our message, we are going to have to manifest it in our lives and communities, and when we do, we may well discover that we contribute to wholeness and peace in our world.

SERMON OUTLINE

Prop12B Jn 6:1-21 the other side of the Sea of Galilee

One of the most memorable miracles of Jesus...

1. The Crowd 1-5: ²*A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick – kept growing > 5000 men (v10) - & Matthew adds (14.21) beside women & children = 10-15000 people?*

2. The Crisis 6-13: As he sat on the hillside he *saw a large crowd coming towards him* swollen by Passover pilgrims...

a) the fear – a multitude of starving people, so Jesus *said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?'* ⁷*Philip* (from Bethsaida & with local knowledge) *answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.'*

b) the food - *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?'* - useless!! But not to Jesus with his amazing divine power...

3. The Christ 14-21: his Messiahship is demonstrated to a) the Crowd:- ¹¹*Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'* Not only were they fed – they were filled!!

b) to the Disciples:- His power is further displayed to the disciples who had begun to row across the Sea alone.. However ¹⁸*The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. They were frightened when they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat... and they were terrified. Jesus however reassures them:- 'It is I; do not be afraid.'* So too does he reassure us today....

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"More Unexpected Jesus," the Rev. Sharon Hiers, Day 1
http://day1.org/1373-more_unexpected_jesus

"Enough Food to Eat," Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America: The National Catholic Weekly*,
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3074

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"Good Food and Great Leftovers," John R. Donahue, SJ, *America: The National Catholic Weekly*

http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2165

"Forms of Hunger and Healing," Michele M. Chollet, *National Catholic Reporter*,
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1141/is_n31_v33/ai_19514631/

CHILDREN

"Sermon of the Week," / "Mensajes para ninos," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity, Ordinary 17, at word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary by Larry Broding.

<http://www.word-sunday.com/Files/b/CorpusChristi-b/K-CorpusChristi-b.html>

Hymn Suggestions:

My Faith Looks Up To Thee
For The Beauty Of The Earth
Trust And Obey
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Great Is Thy Faithfulness
God Of Justice
Hear Our Praises
Give Thanks
Blessed Be Your Name
Priceless Vision