

Joseph A. Veres Tenth Sunday after Pentecost Year B 8/2/2015
John 6:24-35 Doctor's appointment Hymn ELW #
Faith United-- Denver PA Children's sermon Road signs have normal road signs then
signs JAV makes up about church. Love your neighbor. Church around the corner. Read
your Bible. Jesus talks about signs... he fed people and now they can't read the signs.
Grace to you in peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, who is the Christ...
Amen

How's your relationship with God? I'm not sure we think much about a 'check up' for our relationship with the Lord. Most of us know certain events invoke thinking about God: you are facing some disaster and need help; you are sick or injured and you want some immediate medical attention from the Lord to care for the problem, you have no money and you pray like the dickens for a miracle to fend off the bill collector. There are many such events-- including those with the inevitable and oft misused OMG... oh my God. I wonder if atheist fall into the trap of saying that when they are excited over something.

What would you say is the state of your relationship to God? Sort of a foolish question, but then again- not really. Consider for a moment the people of Israel at this early juncture in Exodus. You would think that having seen the plagues, been spared from the angel of death by the lambs blood used for the Passover meal on the lintel, having crossed on dry land through the Red Sea/ Sea of Reeds... they would have a pretty sense of God which should have forged some level of trust. *God said Israel would be free. GOD FREES ISRAEL.* Where is the negative in ANY of those realities?

There are none. So, they should be good to trust on wherever they might be led.

Only there is the small problem. The wilderness doesn't offer resources LIKE EGYPT. THE CURRENT HARDSHIP CAUSES THE PEOPLE TO HEARKEN BACK to the good old days of slavery. It will be true whenever they encounter future adversity. The specific issue here is food. So they complain this is Moses' and Aaron's doing-- they didn't plan adequately for this outing. "If we were in merry old Egypt" there would be bread and meat. Their memory is short on the difficulties of their servitude. They forget Pharaoh's idea of birth control was killing all the male children. How can they forget so fast? I guess hunger will do that. If my immediate concern is an empty stomach; then the BAD OLD DAYS can start looking like the good old days. If so, what would you say IS the real status Israel's relationship with God at this moment?

Well, the Exodus passage is interesting in one way: it presents the people complaint as one blaming Moses and Aaron for this predicament. Only, that rings a little hollow, don't you think. Israel, including Moses and Aaron, has been following the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. God is driving the car. God is giving the travel directions for where and when. So when Israel levels the critique against Moses and Aaron, at best it glosses over the real

issue of WHETHER GOD WILL HANDLE THE CURRENT CRISIS. Now, that sound a lot like disasters, medical attention, and money issues as being ALSO God's issues to handle. They are asking if God is up to handling this issue of food FOR A WHOLE NATION. If so, can God handle OUR IMMEDIATE concern?

So what problems are you facing these days? Are there family difficulties? Is the body not so healthy? Are your eyes weaker... your hearing worse... or are your feet killing you? If that is YOUR CONVERSATION WITH GOD, then maybe we have a diagnosis. Our best way to know our relationship with God is to hear what we say to God. What is your conversation like with God?

In the gospel lesson, we get the same kind of thing. If our physical needs are our priority, then our ability to see what God is doing may make us a little nearsighted. The people there want fed again. Jesus points to a bigger hunger... seeking eternal bread. They want something like the manna (a repeat performance in verification of the prior "sign" as John terms miracles) or God can't have been involved.

It is not always easy to recognize when God has acted. Consider Exodus again-- there is this "substance as fine as frost on the ground." It confuses the people of Israel. *They asked for bread but it didn't come baked in loaves...* instead it was something that

could be collected to be baked into bread. They don't see what was already there, but for 40 years until they enter the promised land when it CEASES; it will be a staple of their diet. God heard the people. God acted quickly to meet their need. Why doesn't God do that for us when our problems arise? Given the example of Israel, it is likely because we don't know the bread when we see it-- EVEN THOUGH WE ASKED FOR BREAD. Our relationship to God hinges on seeing God's answers, having patience to understand, and a heart to trust the answer is there if we ask "what is it?"

The lesson is many if we think of both experiences in Exodus and John's account:

1. God hears. God knows our needs and listens to our voices;
2. God's response is not as we expect but as we need. We CAN state our feelings. We cannot define God's answer;
3. God pushes our imagination. We don't often speak as faith as that which is bigger than our imagination, but God draws us into the wider and often times WILDER places that change us. The "frosting" on the ground was an answer... it was their bread. That is faith;

4. We do NOT listen to our own voices. If we cannot hear ourselves then maybe we should not be surprised we cannot understand and MAYBE EVEN SEE God's answer.

Both Exodus and John suggest our since or self and even our health is judged when we face life as it is with its jagged edges and difficulty where trust is listening... AND ACTING. If we are untested, we are not forced to trust that God is operating. We do not like the tests, but growth demands we be tested. This is a time for our being tested. Amen