

Joseph A. Veres

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost Year B 8/9/2015

John 6:35, 41-51

The coffee is on Hymn ELW #

Faith United-- Denver PA

Children's sermon Kuerig Ask for an adult helper--- make them

a cup of coffee. Have cream and sweetener. Have the Kuerig have the coffee maker and ask if the kids know what it does. Speak about old days-- perk coffee pots... then the drip coffee pots. (Pictures of these) and now we have individual serve coffee. They all do the same thing... or they do something else. This is a device for knowing people. Talk about how coffee allows us get to know other people.

>> God gets to know people by using bread.,

Grace to you in peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, who is the Christ...

Amen

What kind of God do we know? That question is probably so broad that we could range from God's creative element TO a god that punishes, a god that seeks, a god that is confusing- incomprehensible- invisible... a sender of angels... a hider of truth within what is spoken by Jesus and the prophets. God has too many qualities making God inscrutably indefinable.

Is God the God of scarcity? Well John's continued dialogue on bread makes the issue more evident. Which way to we see God... one where the poor continue, the hungry are left unsatisfied, the lame are left to go their own way, the weak are given no strength... and scarcity seems to be the reality we know best. **SOMETHING IS ALWAYS MISSING.** We are by nature people that work and understandable **MOST EASILY** the concept of scarcity. There is a sad consequence to such thinking-- "scarcity thinking" leads to people who give up. When we are frustrated by the unanswerable, then we just let it go... whether "for another day" or completely. "Scarcity thinking" may be said to be among the sins we enjoy.

"Scarcity thinking" might be defined by other terms such as greed, jealousy, coveting, and lust... that place where we think we need "something more."

Consider Elijah from 1 Kings. Elijah is a pillar of what a prophet should be. He does not suffer death. He does all the neat things we might tag as miracles. Here, we see a passage after he has confronted and killed the prophets of Baal and he has Queen Jezebel after his hide. *Off he goes and feels there ARE NO FAITHFUL LEFT in Israel. He is largely on his lonesome... so God "just kill me now" is the way he is thinking.* He is sent off to Mt. Horeb to hear God in the wonderful passage where after many noisy calamities, he comes to know God in the absolute silence. You know how God kicks his back side-- God sends an angel that makes a cake of bread for him to eat and provides a jar of water. Now, that is hardly abundance, but it is enough like a meal of turkey to make him sleep again and awake to a second of the same kind. What seems SO LITTLE BY WAY OF GOOD... not a meal that would be called a feast... he will be sustained 40 days and nights for his journey. Now, was that a meal of scarcity or a meal of abundance?

Might I remind that good old Elijah was ready to throw in the towel prior to this messenger and meal. "Kill me now" and "take away my misery... let ME BE... so I can be GOD OVER"

WHETHER I LIVE OR DIE." What a putz! I'm sorry, aren't we just like the way this putz thinks. When we have important task to do, we give up. We are weary. You ask too much. I've done my share... let someone else go take care of the people who worship the idols of the world. Is that familiar? BUT we are not among the "great unwashed." We have baptized to a purpose to share and... please listen--- and sometimes go without.

JAV STORY ON MAKING COFFEE AND NOT GETTING A CUP FROM THE POT HE BREWED.

Jesus is not said to have EATEN in the narrative of the feeding of the 5,000. Now, *I would conjecture that he ate with the gathering of people; but the gospel is silent to his eating.* Why? What we are fed is the work he has done. The work of the disciples is distributing the meal, then collecting the bread. Is this a reflection of who abundance occurs? When we are fed, then we do not focus on what we lack but on what we have been given to share. What a powerful notion! Scarcity becomes the seedbed for not giving up but **INSTEAD GIVING OUT.**

That becomes a life question: *not just in the way we think about life and how we then conduct our lives--* but whether we understand that **THE BREAD OF LIFE THAT GOD GIVES IS A DYNAMIC POWER THAT CHANGES ALL THAT WE TOUCH.**

If we are not creatures of scarcity, THEN instead we are part of the great storehouse of the saints that is CHANGING A WORLD OF SCARCITY. We are bread that distributed life into a *lifeless and unthinking world* that is hungering for a deepness that cannot be defined except in Christ.

There is a story.

Two poor men were out on the street. They were cold and miserable and hungry when they came across some bread hanging from a dumpster. The men were overjoyed and opened it only to find that it had started to grow mold. The one man holding the bread started to open the dumpster to throw it away and the other stopped him. He said to his companion, "Ethnos (ε ; ρηοϋ) let me have that bread." He sat down and prayed and Ethnos, thinking that he was out of his mind, looked up to heaven and shook his head... but as he looked down; there surrounding his companion was bread with jelly, meat pastes, toasted and with a delectable sauce, buttered, and in so many forms that he marveled that in each of the servings there were ALWAYS 2 helpings. Ethnos was so flabbergasted and bluttered out, "How did you do that?" His friend merely said, "I saw the gift. I asked that God make it useful for God's purpose. Come, let us find others who need to eat." A JAV ORIGINAL

While the story seems farfetched, in the holy land- it is based on fact; bread is not wasted there. Bread is often left out that others may eat. People will take partial loaves and leave them where others may take the bread. Some will make extra loaves and leave them where they know the poor will find the bread. Bread is never thrown away-- it is shared. Bread redefines scarcity into abundance. Jesus redefines bread into life itself. Without Christ, the bread cannot be eaten that gives life.

I thought to have bread with humus today... a suggestion of a professor who served at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Jerusalem. She served as the ELCA pastor for I think 3 or 4 years... it may have been longer. Life is offered in forms we cannot comprehend... from a little boy's meal to that hanging from dumpsters. Our bread is NOT just a small taste of a Sunday morning. It is life for the day and the week and the eternal.

We need to live in the God whose name is abundance. Amen