

# Sermon: Pentecost 13

The Rev. Mike Wernick

August 19, 2018

Year B

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

Psalm 111

Ephesians 5:15-20

John 6:51-58

Three down... one to go... three Bread of Life discourses down... one Bread of Life discourse... next week... to go... before we return to Mark... there are jokes... funny only to preachers... about going on vacation about now... but the fact that we're called to slog through all of these readings... the fact that the lectionary presents four separate weeks of Jesus' Bread of Life sayings... the fact that Jesus comes back to this imagery over and over again... must mean that it's important... that it contains some Wisdom...

In today's Jewish scripture... Solomon knew that Wisdom was more important than riches or long life... or the death of his enemies... and God granted it to him... but Wisdom is different than knowledge... Solomon didn't seek to memorize ancient Babylonian exchange rates... he didn't need to know the numerical value of Pi... out to the four hundredth decimal place... he didn't want to memorize mere facts... not when they can be written down... or in our case today... when they can be searched in a data base... no... Solomon sought something I'll call *intuitive common sense*... something that would enable him to respond in each and every situation... no matter what was going on... with what's been called... *spontaneous... right... action*...

Solomon wanted to discern and understand the complexities which informed each situation differently... the things people said and the things they didn't say... about why they wanted what they wanted... what their histories were... and to understand the underlying issues which give rise to... as physicians say... *the presenting symptoms*... he wanted to see more deeply... into people's true motivations... to understand what it was they might be projecting onto a situation... Solomon wanted to understand the workings of the human heart... as he did with the two women in 1 Kings 3: ... both of whom claimed that an infant child was theirs... that's how he knew that the mother who

was willing to give up her child... rather than have it be cut in two with the sword... was the true mother... this is Wisdom which may not seem to seek fairness... that is... two equal halves of a baby to two mothers... but which accomplishes justice and restoration of the whole child to its rightful mother...

But Wisdom is also like manna in the wilderness... it must be consumed on the day it is given... it must be discerned... and applied... and used right then and there... the voice of Wisdom which speaks to us today... cannot be stored up until tomorrow... or it will rot and be useless... we must wait until tomorrow for tomorrow's Wisdom... because Wisdom is a dynamic... in the moment... revelation... Wisdom is the Holy Spirit speaking to us on the fly... trying to store it up would be like trying to take what was done to solve one problem and expect it to work on all problems...

As Barbara Crafton wrote... *maybe you[ve] had the experience of the living God yesterday... but don't imagine that you will have the same experience today... today is a new day... let it be new... But oh, how we hate this!* [she wrote]... *We do some wonderful thing in church... and so resolve to do it again... so next year... we have the Second Annual Wonderful Thing... and now it's a tradition... and so we have a Third Annual Wonderful Thing... and a fourth... soon there's a standing committee for the Wonderful Thing... with its own budget line... and we couldn't stop it if we tried... but not everything needs to be repeated...* [she wrote]... *or even can be... yes... our traditions ground us... but faith looks forward...*

*I am the living bread that came down from heaven... those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life...* because of their prevailing dietary laws... the Jews and the Pharisees who hear these words... have a difficult time looking forward... these words evoke gruesome images which inhabit... and inhibit... their imagination... no wonder Jesus' words were so repugnant to them... but Jesus wanted his listeners to hear what he was saying beyond the words themselves... Jesus wanted his listeners to see what the bread represented... and the crowd had confused the symbol with the reality... the

bread that God sent was not a substance... but a person... embodying God's power to change us... to see that as bread gave sustenance to the body... the bread which came down from heaven... Jesus' sustenance... gave eternal life... that those who eat and drink mutually abide in a mystical relationship... in Christ and in one another... and it's no coincidence that the Gospel of John is the only one... that tells about Jesus' first miracle at the Wedding at Cana... where he turned water into wine... the best wine... good enough for the master of the feast to question the groom about why it was brought out so late... but symbolizing the heavenly banquet at which God gives us God's best...

In his article... Lutheran Pastor Tim Brown wrote... *But I've been to church services where the Eucharist feels like a funeral... in long procession the people parade forth without even so much as a smile... as if we all had just witnessed Christ sacrificed on the altar... and we're so sad for what we've seen... [for] what we've done... I'm not saying that Eucharist isn't serious... [he wrote]... it certainly is serious... it's a time for confession and reconciliation... but it is... above all... a time for celebration... the word "Eucharist" literally means "Thanksgiving." But our sacrifice is one of praise and gratitude... because God offers us such wonderful grace... and Jesus noted that people approach him because the Spirit moves them... invites them into relationship... and it's not because they have figured everything out... it's not because they felt they were worthy...*

*We approach communion... we receive Christ... because we are dead... dead from a week of screwing things up... dead from a week of feeling like everyone is stepping on us... dead from a week of arguing with our spouse... dead from a week of feeling alone to the point of distraction... dead from a week of a dead-end job... from kids who we love but yelled at too much... from work we love but know isn't the best for the world... from work we hate but know we're making a difference... from arguments and sins of all kinds... from caring too much and caring too little... dead from life-overload... dead from too much death...*

*Look... [he wrote]... on Sunday mornings Lutherans... [and I would add Episcopalians] ... have an altar call... but unlike our brothers and sisters in other camps... we don't ask you to accept Jesus into your hearts... instead we tell you that Jesus accepts you... just as you are... dead... for all sorts of reasons...*

*And you are assured that Christ has accepted you into God's enfolding love... into God's heart... and you are then invited to have a meal at Christ's invitation... that our theology tells us... starts to fill in the gaps that you just can't seem to fill [in] otherwise... that is grace... communion is grace... because at communion... dead things come alive again... because the Bread of Life... is for dead folks...*

Our two congregations have moved past so much of this kind of vision-less seeing and thinking... but much of the world still holds on more tightly to what is fair instead of what is just... we have become increasingly entrenched in an ancient tribalism... that divides instead of unifies... that accuses instead of reconciles... but a group's boundaries are little more than convenient ways of holding us together... of giving us guideposts... until we are ready for the boundlessness of I AM... until we are ready for the Oneness that Jesus and God shared... so that we may live forever... and according to this Gospel writer... eternal life begins now...

Mike+