

August 1, 2021

“The Bread of Life”

Today we worship in the beauty of nature – a very different expression of nature than we have seen of **the awesome destructive power of nature** in the past few weeks. There has been smoke and the blaze of wildfires combined with disastrous results of floods in Europe. These images draw forth compassion for those directly affected and a renewed sense of *humility for our place in creation*: There are forces and powers before which we are helpless. Whenever we run up against necessity there is an intensity to life.

Necessity drives many of the choices of our everyday lives. You don't think so? We are all thankfully wearing clothes and will have food to eat today. If things are going well, we don't think about what is necessary each day a lot. **If things are not going well, we may lose sleep over it.**

What is the place of the reality of necessity as we live as God's children? The ancient Greeks said, “*Necessity is even above the Gods.*” It can feel challenging to live as God's children in a world defined and outlined by necessity. When necessity becomes our focus, God fades into the background and necessity can feel like it is God.

A clever person said, “*If you don't think anyone cares if you are alive, stop paying your bills.*” This sort of validation **is not the kind we are looking for.**

In our text today we get a glimpse of the power and draw of necessity. Jesus has fed thousands of people - and then slips away. They wake up, discover his absence, and track him down. Jesus is not moved by their efforts - he is blunt. **“You only tracked me down because you want another free meal.”**

To be fair - most of the people Jesus was speaking to that day would have been those who lived on the edge of necessity. People for whom a meal which might otherwise elude them looked pretty good. How could they not be *intrigued by a preacher who literally as well as figuratively fed the flock?*

There is a reason the misguided, “*God wants you rich*” theology never seems to die the death it deserves. Having accepted **God’s love for us**, we follow up with a **laundry list of desires for more!** How cool would it be if God really was our private concierge who excelled in getting us free stuff that we want?

The big danger for us is that **focusing on the gift we want removes attention from the one who gives it.** We don’t really have a relationship with Amazon – no matter how much stuff we order from them – even in pandemic! But our connection with God is one of relationship. Personal connection which outweighs bargaining for stuff.

The good news is, God is more faithful than necessity is unrelenting. Even as we have physical needs we ignore to our peril - we have spiritual needs which nourish and fill us when met. **Just as all people need food to live - so all people need nurturing of their spirit to thrive.** *I am the bread of life, come down from heaven - giving life to the world.* This is Jesus’ reality - it is powerful and attractive.

We miss the reality before us – as the people in our text did today – when we yearn for less than a **God who redeems and leads.** We often want a God who pulls good fortune out of a hat rather than a God who molds and shapes us into those who carry God’s love and life in the world. **To have faith means to trust.** Trust God as we engage in living.

Let’s take our cue from Jesus today manage **our life circumstances by the grace of God rather than defining life by circumstance as if it were God.** Necessity is with us always. Let’s manage it in ways that make God happy. Let’s dig into what it means to embrace and live our lives on the nourishment that comes from feasting on the bread of life which gives life to the world.