

Sermon – John 6:24-35

August 4, 2024

This morning, our gospel story picks up the day after Jesus had fed the 5000 using two fish and five loaves of bread and still gathered 12 baskets of crumbs.

Most of those 5000 had gone home. But some remain in the place where Jesus has fed them.

As Jesus often did, he had slipped away and continued on his journey.

But those who remained when they woke in the morning and didn't find Jesus among them, decided to go and find him.

Imagine with me if you will for a moment, you are part of the group who remains and decides to go to find Jesus.

Perhaps it being the next day you're hungry and you want to see if he will feed you again.

Perhaps from that miracle, you have come to believe that Jesus is someone special, perhaps even the Messiah, and you want to go and see him again.

Perhaps you're just curious to see what he will do next.

Whatever you're thinking, someone says let's go find him. And you all go together to see where he has gone.

And you find him.

You have been part of this amazing act that Jesus did. Do you thank him when you see him? Do you fall on your knees and give praise to him? Do you say to him, Lord, I believe.

No. None of you do any of that.

Instead, you say when did you get here, Jesus? Give us another sign! Do something so that we may believe.

The day before you had been among the 5000 people Jesus had fed with two fish and five loaves of bread with 12 baskets of leftovers, but you still want, need, more.

Although John doesn't record it, I must believe that if Jesus did not roll his eyes in that moment, he certainly must've been tempted to do so.

Jesus ignores the question of when he arrived. It's irrelevant. Instead, he opens for you the path to new life with God.

Jesus says, you only followed me because I fed you. **Do not work** for the food that will go bad, but **work** for the food that gives eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

Someone in your crowd then asked, "What must we do to perform the works of God?"

You were probably thinking that Jesus might say follow the law or honor your mother and father or go to the temple and pray.

Instead Jesus answers, "This is **the work of God**, that you **believe** in him whom he has sent."

So Jesus reminds you of when your ancestors are complaining because they're hungry and they're thirsty in the desert after God had led them from harsh enslavement in Egypt. Your ancestors had started thinking maybe they would have been better off to have stayed as

enslaved people in Egypt no matter how horrendous it became. God, in his steadfast love for the Israelites, sent manna, the bread of heaven. Every morning God shared the bread of heaven with the Israelites in such abundance that they had more than enough to nourish themselves every day. And it appeared every morning for all the years that they were in the desert.

You, and the rest of the crowd who had followed Jesus, know the story of Exodus so when Jesus says to you “I am the bread of life. Whoever believes in me will never be hungry or thirsty.” You understand the work of God is to believe in Jesus.

Now Jesus does not mean believe in the same way that we might say “I believe it might rain today.” or “I believe the plan is to meet for lunch after church.” The believing that Jesus is speaking about is something that we do with our whole selves. Believing in Jesus is giving our whole selves to God and to doing God's work in the world.

The Rev. Victoria Pretti wrote:

The word “believe” is the same as the word in the opening line of the creed that we say together every Sunday. “Credo” in Latin. Credo in unum Deum. We believe in one God. Fine. But the word means so much more than just giving intellectual assent to something. It actually and literally means to GIVE YOUR HEART to something!

What should we DO, Jesus?

Give me your heart says Jesus. Give your heart to God.

AND it's the “work of God” because God has already and always given us God's heart!

God gave his heart to the Israelites and so he brought them out of exile and slavery in Egypt to come to the promised land. And God provided

food for them even when they were complaining because God had given his heart to them.

God gave his heart to those who followed Jesus providing for them abundantly out of two fish and 12 loaves.

God gave his heart to all of us by offering his son to die on the cross to forgive our wrongs and to give us eternal life.

Jesus says do the work of God: believe in me. Give your heart to me.

So we can ask ourselves what does it look like when we give our hearts to God, when we believe?

When we believe in Christ then we follow in the footsteps and words of Jesus.

When we believe we put aside greed, envy, and hatred and we let love lead.

When we believe we speak out racism, sexism, homophobia, and bigotry.

When we believe we take care of God's creation.

When we believe we work to end hunger.

When we believe we work so that everyone has safe and affordable housing.

When we believe we love our neighbors and welcome the strangers among us.

When we believe Paul says we live a life worthy of the love God has given to us and speak the truth in love so we may grow in every way into our life with Christ.

When God's people believe and give their hearts to God, they create the Garden Church in San Pedro, California from a deserted lot so "all sorts of different kinds of people gravitate around it. From the autistic

pre-teen who comes right up to it and lunges toward the Communion bread, to the shy blond woman who carefully parks her possession-laden shopping cart outside the gates and sits quietly in the prayer garden until it's time for dinner. People come through our gates to explore the garden, to volunteer, to take home fresh veggies, to pray, to be seen—to feed and to be fed.”

When God's people believe and give our hearts to God, we provide in the school supplies for the children at Lake Elkhorn Middle School.

We provide meals at the Dorsey center; we gather food for Grassroots and Columbia Community Gares. We build houses with Dream Builders and help provide medical care through Somos Amigos.

When we give our hearts to God we gather at this table to be nourished by the body and blood of Christ, the holy food and drink of new and unending life.

My siblings in Christ, do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which Jesus has given you. Do the work of God for Jesus who is the bread of God which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Do the work of God and believe for Jesus has promised “whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Amen.