

Pentecost 9B – Proper 13 (8/2/09 – Christ Our Bread of Life)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Well ... we've jumped from MARK 6 to JOHN 6 – but we're still in the account of the aftermath of our Lord's feeding of the 5,000. John was inspired to write his Gospel later perhaps after Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And it is often the case that when we get to such events, we see that the Holy Spirit inspired John to fill in some of the details – in particular, theological details. Whereas Mark records Jesus walking on the water, and then jumps immediately to the great healing event – where *as many as touched [even the fringe of His garment] were made well* [MK 6.56] – John speaks about Jesus' in depth conversation with those who had tracked Him down ... after noting their amazement at His arrival there.

When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?” [JN 6.25] And this is when things get interesting. Jesus is no mincer-of-words – He would never make a politician in any age ... especially not our own. Knowing their hearts – just as He knows **our** hearts – Jesus *speak[s] the truth in love* [EPH 4.15] and responds: *Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, NOT because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.* [JN 6.26] Our Lord goes right to the problem – their sin problem ... and our own as well. They're looking for a “Bread King” – someone who will put bread on their tables every day. The world is no different today – and we are no different according to our sinful flesh. They want a deliverer ... a “messiah” ... a “savior” – but one after their own making ... one who will do the things **they** want ... the way **they** want ... in the time-frame **they** specify. And really, God is quite secondary – if that.

We can tell that God takes low priority in their lives by their later words about the Manna in the wilderness. *“Then what sign do You do, that we may see and believe You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate the Manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”* Jesus then said to them, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the True Bread from heaven.”* [6.30-32] God is such a low priority for them, that they give credit to Moses for the Manna. They claim to quote Scripture, but they miss the very words of Moses that we heard in our *Old Testament* from EXODUS: *And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.”* [16.15] Moses gives all the credit to God. The crowds who ate their fill the previous afternoon give credit to Moses – and want Jesus to show them some equivalent sign and work (as if He hadn't done so already ... just yesterday). I suppose our Lord also could have reminded them of how Moses was punished when he took credit for bringing water out of the rock for them – that he was not permitted to enter the promised land ... only see it

from afar before he died [NUM 20; DEU 34].

How often do we give credit to men – to **ourselves** – for what we ought to give thanks to God? Will the kind of word of the Lord spoken to Moses and Aaron fall upon us: *Because you did not believe in Me, to uphold Me as holy in the eyes of the people ... therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them* [NUM 20.12]? We should see all kinds of people as God's instruments to do us good – but we must see them as **GOD'S** instruments ... we must recognize that **God Himself** is working good for us ... through the trash collector on up. And we should give Him thanks and praise for His gracious works on our behalf.

But instead, the moment something gets even just a little difficult ... our way becomes just a little bumpy ... our stomachs are just a little bit hungry ... the roof over our heads begins to be just a little bit leaky, we grumble and complain just like the Israelites. We grumble and complain about our government. We grumble and complain about the price of food ... clothing ... gasoline ... insurance ... health care – you name it. We grumble and complain to and sometimes about our spouses ... our parents ... our children ... our siblings. We grumble and complain about our bosses and coworkers and subordinates. We grumble and complain about teachers and students. In the end, what is all our grumbling and complaining but against God Himself? As Moses pointed out to the children of Israel: *When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against Him – who are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.* [EXO 16.8] When we grumble, we are ultimately grumbling against the Lord Himself. And that is nothing less than sin ... sin from which we must repent.

In our *Gospel* reading, we see the same sort of grumbling, in a sense. The people want more signs ... more works. Jesus had just provided them with a miraculous meal. And their attitude? *That was yesterday ... but what have you done for us today?* The sinful flesh is never satisfied – we see that in the people of Israel ... we see it in the crowd ... and if we're honest, we see it in ourselves. Rightfully, the Lord could become fed up with us and decide that enough is enough – *If they're not going to be grateful ... not going to recognize My goodness ... not going to thank Me ... then I'll just stop giving them good gifts.* That's how we would – **do** – respond to such ingratitude on the part of those we reach out to. But thanks be to Christ that it is **not** the way He responds.

The Lord points His grumbling children to His goodness – that's what we see in both the *Old Testament* and the *Gospel*. *And the LORD said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall*

*know that I am the LORD your God.” [EXO 16.11-12] Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He has sent. ... Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the True Bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to Him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.” [JN 6.29, 32-35] What is God’s response to grumblings ... doubt ... unbelief – even **ours**? Not His wrath, as we might expect – as we would dish up – but **more mercy!** You’re hungry, still? I’ll give you more food – meat and bread ... every day ... for forty years! Oh, and by the way, your clothes won’t become thread-bare ... and your sandals won’t break down and fall apart! You didn’t get enough of the bread and fish yesterday – even though you were full at the end of the day? OK, I’ll give you Bread ... True Bread ... Myself ... My Body hung on the Cross to satisfy your hunger for righteousness ... My Blood shed on the Cross to quench your thirst for forgiveness and salvation! You want signs ... works? I’ll give you the sign and work of the highest, greatest love: Dying for those I call and make My friends ... and then rising to life again on the third day to give you life!*

In love – in **great** love and even **greater** mercy – God gives us His good ... indeed, His most precious and perfect ... Gift: the Gift of His Son ... and with Him the gifts of forgiveness, salvation and True Life. In perfect mercy, grace, and love, God gives us **Christ Our Bread of Life**.

Many of you will be familiar with the ad campaign: “Give the gift that keeps on giving.” It has been used by many over the years. It’s probably still around somewhere. But like everything in the world, it is really temporary ... fleeting ... passing away. In our *Gospel* for today, there are two verses that speak of the **true** gift that keeps on giving. Hear verses 32 and 33 once again: *Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father GIVES you the True Bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and GIVES life to the world.”* The Father gives you the True Bread from heaven – **Christ Our Bread of Life** – again and again ... also here today. And **Christ Our Bread of Life** in turn comes down from heaven and GIVES life to the world – again and again ... continuously ... until the end of time. **Christ Our Bread of Life** – the True Bread from heaven – comes to you **today** to give you, once again, His Life. For that is Who He is – the God Who forever IS ... the God Who forever loves ... the God Who forever comes to you to give you His gifts ... the God Who has and does and will **always** give you life ... true life ... eternal life ... through the forgiveness of your sins purchased by **Christ Our Bread of Life**.

And in particular *Christ Our Bread of Life* comes to you today not only in His holy Word, but also in the Sacrament – the Bread of Life comes to you today to give you His life in His Body hidden in, with, and under the bread and His Blood hidden in, with, and under the wine in His Holy Supper. And just as requested, Jesus *give[s] us this Bread always* – wherever this Sacrament is celebrated according to His command. Here is true food that last ... spiritual food for the spirit ... food that nourishes your soul with the salvation won by the *one Lord* Who is the Author and Perfecter of the *one Faith* that you received in the *one Baptism* into His death and resurrection [EPH 4.4] ... *food that endures to eternal life* [6.27].

Jesus said to them, “I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.” [JN 6.35]

In the Name of the FATHER and of the + SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]