

**- Saint John's Pulpit (August 1, Tenth Sunday after Pentecost)
- "Do You Want to Preserve Your Food?" John 6:24-35**

²⁴ So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" ²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." ²⁸ Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ³⁰ So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?" ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" ³² Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is that which^[a] comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴ They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

When they received the food...

A week ago, we had a chance to ponder the story of feeding the five thousand people from John 6. The story today deals with what happened to people after experiencing that miracle in Bethsaida. Here is a question. When they received the food from Jesus, do you remember their reaction in the story? Our common sense says that they should be thankful to the Lord for His feeding Grace. However, a careful reading of this story presented in Matthew (14:13-21), Mark (6 30-44), Luke (9:10-17), and John (6:1-13) makes you see that there is no thankfulness by the people! Have you thought about this?

In John 6:14-15, we can see how people reacted after the feeding miracle by Jesus which the other three Gospels do not present.

14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." 15 When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. John 6:14-15 NRSV

You may remember the story "The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs" which is one of Aesop's fables. Although there are lots of versions, sometimes a goose, other times a hen... but here is one main storyline:

There was a couple (not wise!). They had a goose that laid a golden egg every day. They assumed that the goose must contain a great lump of gold in its side, so they killed her to get the gold. However, they found that their goose was the same as other normal geese. So, they lost it!

Don't you think that this story looks like John 6:14-15 exactly? Does it make sense? Unfortunately, the people who experienced the miraculous feeding grace by Jesus were mesmerized by Jesus' sign, not Jesus itself! Like the couple in one of Aesop's fables, they might assume that they could get more miracles or benefits when they made Jesus their king.

Indeed, we know that this is not the only case to see no thankfulness by people. When it comes to God's feeding Grace, we must mention the story of Exodus. I am not sure whether you could have a chance to read stories about the Exodus. Exodus was not free from Egypt! It was a process of Exodus from their grumbling life attitude!

On the way to the Promised Land, lots of complaints and grumbings had to be repeated. Although God did a catering business for the Israelites carefully by providing water, manna, and quails... they were not thankful to God, NEVER! Even when they began to see the Land of Canaan and heard a 'preview' report from the twelve representatives, they blamed and complained (Numbers 13-14).

The story today tells us how seriously Jesus was disappointed by the people, when they sought for Jesus, not for Jesus, but for all miracles by Jesus, which means bread. Now, Jesus is challenging us to check out our faith seriously because we are vulnerable to juggle between chasing bread and seeking for Jesus.

26 Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not

work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” John 6:26-27 NRSV

It is very clear to see Jesus’ special request here – do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which means Jesus Christ. All people who enjoyed manna and quails from God in the Exodus? They all died! However, if we eat the bread of life, Jesus, we live an eternal life.

³³ For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” ³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:33-35 NRSV

To feel it or not, we experience God’s feeding Grace. Our Spiritual maturity makes us know that we can do nothing with God’s grace which means we need to live our life with the Bread of Life, Jesus. At the same time, we are required to preserve the Bread from Heaven without perishing. How? A couple of ways of preserving your food (Bread) are here.

First, Be thankful to the Bread, the Lord!

All who experienced the miracle of feeding the five thousand people didn’t appreciate Jesus, rather tried to use the Lord for their greed. So did the Israelites who experienced the same grace through manna and quails by God and never stopped their grumbling. When Adam and Eve lost a sense of thankfulness to God for everything from Him, they lost the Garden of Eden.

The point is this. When you experience God’s blessings, please think about where it is from. You remember Psalm 121 and its first and second verses:

*¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?*

*² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1-2 NRSV*

Simply speaking, do not focus on your bread, but do focus on its origin! This will make you be a person of a thankful heart without perishing your blessings.

Second, Share your Bread with others!

Another way of preserving your bread is to share it with others who need it. The Bible says that our blessings should be shared with others. When the Israelites received manna from God first, they did not follow the rule from God faithfully. What was the rule? Do not store it up! Yes, manna was a daily food for the Israelites, and it was not allowed to reserve for the next time. The only exception was on the day before the Sabbath day. As they were not allowed to do something on their Sabbath day, reserving manna was excused only on this occasion.

22 On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.'" 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it. Exodus 16:22-24 NRSV

However, some people wanted to reserve and store manna for the next time. If that happened, the manna left by people went bad!

19 And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over until morning." 20 But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. 21 Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted. Exodus 16:19-21 NRSV

The Bible does not want us to use God's blessings for our own, rather encourages us to use them for others. The miracle of feeding five thousand people could be possible from a little boy's sharing his bag lunch. What if he used it for his own? Maybe he would have figured out his hunger, but no God's feeding grace for all! In order for my blessing to be God's blessing, we need to share it with others. This is the way of preserving our food without perishing. At the same time, this is how to make my food the Heavenly food for all!

Thankfulness to the Lord and thoughtfulness for others... by these two action items – love God and love neighbors, our life will be nourished more abundantly and will be another moment to experience God's feeding Grace. Please let your blessing be circulated under His love. You will never be hungry and thirsty.