

"Partnering with God"

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday July 25, 2021

John 6:1-21

So this morning we are in John's gospel.

And we are reading about one the signs that Jesus performed, the feeding of the 5 thousand.

John has outlined a purpose for writing his gospel, he says:

"These signs (including the feeding of the 5 thousand), are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

I think that most of us here believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, but I think also, that part of why we are together on this Sabbath day, together in worship, is because here is one of the places we experience life in Jesus' name.

When we say that we receive life in Jesus' name, I think part of what we are claiming that the life that Jesus gives changes us, sets us free, and is life that is infused with God's eternal love for us.

This sign that Jesus performed took place during the feast of the Passover.

What do we know about the Feast of Passover?

It's a feast that remembers that God delivered his people out of slavery, and rescued them and brought them into the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land where the people were free to worship God, free to live abundant lives.

But we know that the people rebelled against God and against God's ways and they lost the land.

So the feast of Passover reminded the people always that God was faithful even when they were not faithful to God.

It reminded them of God's care, God's rescue, and God's desire for them to live abundant lives, where everyone was rightly related to God, and rightly related to one another.

So in the midst of the Feast of Passover a large crowd followed Jesus and he taught them.

The people had seen Jesus heal the sick.

And they wanted to see more.

In other places Jesus describes the people as being like sheep without a shepherd.

And so Jesus sets about to teach in words and in this sign.

Notice in this sign, Jesus involves and partners with the disciples, with a young boy, and with this large crowd of people that they might be part of this sign about who Jesus is, and about what life in his name looks like.

There Jesus is teaching on a mountain side and the large crowd, and Jesus asks the disciples where they might get bread enough for the crowd.

The disciples see scarcity, and an impossible ask.

Six months wages wouldn't feed the crowd.

They don't have nearly enough.

Where could they bread enough for the crowd?

They couldn't.

But they are not figuring Jesus into the equation.

And at the same time that God acts through Jesus, Jesus continues to use and include the disciples, a boy's lunch, and the crowd.

And a kind of Passover meal, a sign of God's deliverance, is enacted in the wilderness.

The people of God needed to be set free from slavery in Egypt, they needed to be set free from Roman occupation, but they needed more than that.

They needed to be restored to right relationship with God. They needed to be set free from their sin and brokenness, and all that prevented them from living as God's beloved people together in partnership with God over the earth.

I spent a few moments thinking about us... what enslaves us... what keeps us from experiencing fullness of life... here are a few of my thoughts:

-we as a society, people in the world around us, are addicted to work, or money, or power, or sex, or being in control.

People grasp, on the one hand, to be god, to be in control, the world is self absorbed, and self obsessed.

And on the other hand, no one wants responsibility for anything, everyone is a victim. Every where we see death, corruption, and it seems pretty hopeless that things are going to change.

Into this world, into our midst Jesus comes and sets a table in the wilderness, and he invites us to sit down with him, and he takes the little that we have, and in his hands, there is not only enough there is an abundance, overflowing generosity, deliverance by God.

All eat, all are filled. All are changed, at least they are changed as they continue in the presence of Jesus.

And everyone that day experienced something of the new life given in Jesus' name.

Everyone experienced something of life infused with God's eternal love, a foretaste of the banquet that even now is being prepared for us.

A few verses down from our reading the people come to Jesus saying to him: *"What sign will you give us? What will you do so we can see it and believe you?"*³¹ *Long ago our people ate the manna in the desert. It is written in Scripture, 'The Lord gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*

³² *Jesus said to them, "What I'm about to tell you is true. It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven. It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven."*³³ *The bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven. He gives life to the world."*

³⁴ *"Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."*

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

Two things I would say in closing.

The first is Jesus is the one who delivers us, who is able to deliver this world, who sets us free and teaches us a new way, a way of life in his name together.

But the second, is that it is always in partnership, and we as God's people are always part of God's equation.

As we meet this world in all its brokenness, we need to remember that God is able.

But God uses us, even the little we have.

And as we meet, as together we are in the presence of Jesus, all are fed, all experience life in Jesus' name.

Thanks be to God.