

Christian Body Building

Sermon by Pastor Patrick Fish

August 4-5, 2018

Pentecost 11

John 6:24-35

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.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

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. 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."

Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?"

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

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? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

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. For the bread of God is that which 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 will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

—John 6:24-35 (NRSV)

Grace and Peace to you from God, who sent His son to be the Bread of life. So no one is hungry. Who calls us to be the body for the sake of the world. Amen.

In our Gospel reading today, crowds are hungry. They go looking for Jesus. And when they finally come upon him, Jesus urges them to change their mindset. He says not to chase him because their stomachs are empty. Food perishes. It's fleeting. He tells them to chase him to get a glimpse of God.

We are all hungry. But Jesus here isn't talking about physical hunger. He's talking about a hunger that is in all of us. That hunger we all need. That is deep within young and old. A hunger to experience God's grace. God's mercy. God's love. And Jesus promises that

he is the way to experience God's mercy, grace, and love. He is the fulfillment. He is the embodiment. He is God in the flesh.

Jesus is the Bread of Life. Sent so that all may be fed. So that all may be nourished. So that all may be satisfied. Jesus is the manna we seek. He is the bread God provides as God has always provided God's people. Only this time, we don't just receive physical, tangible nourishment in this life. We receive nourishment for eternal life. Now and forever.

Many of us are often looking for signs. We crave them. We hunger to witness God. To catch a glimpse of God's activity. We are like the crowd willing to travel to find him.

This past week, seventeen high school students and three adult leaders from St. Mark's did just that. The cool part is that not only did we get to experience God through the people we met, we were fed. Nourished by the people of Taylorsville, North Carolina.



Departure day from St. Mark's



Enroute to Taylorsville, NC

And Taylorsville was uplifted by us. By our incredible young people. Their energy. Their spark. Their zest. It was infectious. And it took root.



Habitat Build



Habitat Build

People were seeking to have their homes built. Their kids had a good day at Kids' Club. Doors were painted. And people received hands-on care. But they also received something more: a witness that God embraces them.

We were the body of Christ providing the manna from heaven. I couldn't be more proud of our young people. And all the hard work and the relationships they formed this past week.



Kids' Club



Face painting at Kids' Club



Food prep for volunteers



Mountain hike

[During the service, several students shared their Mission Trip experiences, and a slide show offered some trip highlights.]

This trip was so phenomenal. I love how, in the beginning, the students were a little timid. Nervous and clinging onto what was comfortable. By the end, we were one big group. Tired but not showing it. Alive and ready to serve God in whatever way that day called for.

To start the trip, Anna, Alisa, and I stressed to the kids the importance of relationships. Service isn't just hammering nails. It's not just planning Kid's Club. Joining in God's work means getting to know people. Building relationships. Listening to people's stories. Affirming that they, like all people, deserve love and our time.

And these kids did that. All week. In the evening we would recap the day as a group. And each evening, they would share about a person they had met. And they'd share in detail that person's story. You could just see how touched these kids were and could hear how touched the people we served were.

I thought today's Gospel reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesian church was perfect for this day. Paul reminds the people the role of the Church. Reminds them what it means to carry on Jesus' ministry.

The Church is called to be one body, always connected to the one God. And no one is excluded from being the Church. All of us are given the gifts of grace. Grace sets us all, young and old, free, and we then are to play a part in building up the body. We are knitted together. Unified together, like the human body.

Linked forever. Arm and arm. Shoulder to shoulder. All members of the Church have value. All members of the Body of Christ have gifts to offer.

Jesus wants us to be one. One people built for action. Brought together in love. Freed by grace. Empowered by the Holy Spirit with gifts to serve the neighbor.

Our youth didn't just talk about Church. They *were* the Church. They lived it.

They aren't the future of the Church. They *are* the Church now.

We all are the Church now. And each of us has a piece to play.

Upon arriving today, all of you were given a puzzle piece. It's a reminder to take home that no piece is more important or less important. It is only when we come together that we become whole. We are each a part of God's design. *You* are the Church. *We* are the Church. This is what Christian life is. This is what it means to be a part of the body of Christ and build up the body of Christ.

Amen.

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