

Each summer during the Pentecost season,  
we have a choice in the Revised Common Lectionary  
among two sets readings from the Hebrew Bible.  
I chose the readings in Track 1 this year which is the saga  
found in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel and 1<sup>st</sup> Kings.  
It concerns the desire of the people of Israel to have a king  
“like all other nations.”  
God, through Samuel, the prophet and last Judge of Israel,  
warns the people that this is not a good solution  
and that they will suffer under kings.  
From there we heard the story of Saul, then Saul and David, and now we are hearing  
about David as King.

It is really noteworthy that the Hebrew Bible tells stories  
about people who are deeply flawed.  
Saul, who had such great promise, turned out to be incompetent. He assumed authority  
that he was not given  
and descends into paranoia.  
He even violates priestly law by calling on the Witch of Endor  
to do a seance.

God tells Samuel to anoint an unlikely candidate, the seventh son,  
to be king instead.  
David proves to be a capable warrior and leader.  
He eventually becomes king,  
yet his family life is a wreck  
and he becomes an adulterer and murderer.

The story doesn't get much better except that God loves David,  
not for what he does but for what he can do.  
It's a little naive to say that God's grace is active in David's life.  
God doesn't protect David from the consequences  
of his failures and successes.  
But God does show God's faithfulness and forgiveness.  
It might be cheap to say it,  
but God's loves David and there is nothing that David  
can do about it.

He turns again and again to God for guidance,  
even if he doesn't follow the guidance.  
David pens or sings some of the greatest of Hebrew poetry  
which is honored even today in our scriptures.  
David even listens to the voice of God and obeys.

The Saul-David-Solomon saga is one that  
has all the triumph and tragedy of many families,  
like mine and yours.  
They were frail creatures like me and you.  
Yes, they were kings which made their sins magnified  
as they were the supreme leaders of their people,

an unruly bunch as there ever was.  
Yet there spread out and retained for posterity is their story,  
and we are to learn from it.  
Dwight Zscheile, in the book we have been using for our Pastor's Forum, says that "the Hebrew scriptures are full of stories of imperfect, doubting, unfinished humans like us being entrusted by God with seemingly impossible callings and promises - futures into which they typically stumble rather than achieve with competence and mastery. In, through, and sometimes in spite of their very humanity, God sets about restoring the world. We inhabit the same story today."

We learn that God never gives up on us even when we give up on God. We learn that God is faithful and is ready to try another way when we go a different direction.

We learn that God is willing to give Grace under the most extreme situations.

Our Gospel reading to day deals with one such situation.

Last week we heard about he feeding of the 5,000,  
and Jesus walking on the sea at night.

In Jesus time, scholars think that there was difference in common understanding of water and sea.

Water was cleansing and satisfied thirst.

Then, as now, people couldn't live without water.

But the sea was not seen a water.

Even a lake like the "Sea of Galilee" was something different.

Seas were places of chaos.

Seas were seen as living beings,

besides there were beings in the seas.

To walk on the seas was to trample the beings that could snatch and engulf people.

Jesus walking on water proves his place in the hierarchy of the cosmos.

People followed Jesus to the other shore of the Seas of Galilee and found him.

"...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."

Food in the ancient world was a metaphor for the divine gift of life. Remember most people, maybe 90%, lived at the subsistence level. The people who followed Jesus had been fed and now they wanted more.

But Jesus was offering something very different.

The people challenged Jesus recalling that Moses feed the people wandering the wilderness with manna.

Jesus reminds them that it was not Moses who feed them, but  
“... 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.”

For us, bread is also a symbol of a divine gift.

We come to the table to be fed bread and to relieve our thirst.

We come to the table to receive the Bread of Heaven  
and the Cup of Salvation.

For us, this gift and action is our way of symbolically  
taking in and being renewed by this Holy Food.

You may remember that we said during our Instructed Eucharist  
through repeating the words and actions of Jesus’ last meal  
with his disciples, we ourselves join the story and make it our own. We don’t just watch  
the drama or listen to it unfold,

but we enter into the story as we too take the bread and wine  
and eat and drink.

The ordinary bread and wine, the elements of communion become the outward signs of  
inward grace.

That grace, or gift from God is Jesus’ real presence  
in the Eucharist through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The real presence of Christ is a full statement of our belief  
in God as a Trinity of persons.

This real presence is not the result of a magical incantation  
on the part of the priest.

No set of words makes Eucharist happen.

It is the whole action taken together that effects the Eucharist:  
the gathered community of faith

remembering Jesus’ last meal with his disciples  
and calling on the Holy Spirit to transform

the gifts of bread and wine into spiritual food and drink. It is God’s action  
that makes the Eucharist.

Our remembering itself has a spiritual side that can’t be missed.

It’s called *anamnesis*, which is the exact opposite of amnesia. When we have amnesia,  
we forget who we are

and where we came from.

With *anamnesis*, we remember in such a way as to bring Christ’s death and resurrection  
alive again in vivid, spiritual,

even mystical ways—ways in which the power of Jesus life and sacrifice 2,000  
years ago is clear and alive today.

This spiritual food enables us to be sent “into the world in peace”

and have God “grant us strength and courage to love  
and serve God with gladness and singleness of heart.”

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