

## Pastor Roy's sermon from July 26, 2015

2 Kings 4:42-44, Psalm 145:10-19, Ephesian 3:14-21, John 6:1-21

I heard a man this week speak of his life before he came to the United States and food was simply a matter of keeping up one's energy. He wasn't choosy or concerned about what style of food he might choose at a restaurant, every meal he ate was prepared either by him or someone he knew. There was no Chinese, Mexican, Italian, bistro. Food was not a novelty, it was survival. He ate what was available. That is the nature of hunger. When he came to the US, it was quite strange when he heard people deciding what kind of food they might choose to eat out. The thought had never occurred to him before that there could be such a variety of choices with so little effort.

So it is strange that these people listening to Jesus who have the same concern about sourcing their next meal have set aside their usual care in food planning. This might be John's ways of saying, "Hey! Pay attention, this message is quite important. They were more concerned about Jesus' message than about their next meal. . .and yet Jesus provides it anyway! We also have the gospel embedded in a miracle story about Jesus' ministry. Trust and provision.

Impossible scarcity becomes unimaginable abundance. The bread for the masses is not just the fishes and loaves, it is the promise that "God will provide." That is the bread of life. for the masses is not just the fishes and loaves, it is the promise that "God will provide." That is the bread of life. Funny the masses seem to have learned this lesson before the disciples. They are learning to trust for daily bread.

Later the disciples are saved from their fear, from their aloneness as they welcome Jesus into the boat upon the mighty waves. We read, "They wanted to take him into the boat." . . . "And immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going." They knew they were safe with Jesus.

Reminds me a bit of my childhood experience of thunderstorms. We lived at the top of the hill and could see to the south and west. Great vantage point for lightning. A bit close the one time it hit the light pole across the street and sent splinters flying. Light stayed on for a while after that. But we loved watching the storms come in with the sights and sounds. We weren't afraid. I don't know if it was that my father wasn't afraid, or if it was that he was there with us looking out the window, being careful not to touch the metal window sill. We knew, as long as we didn't touch the metal, we would be ok. Hmm.

On the hillside it is the disciples vs. hunger. On the water it is the disciples against the elements. Do you think it was just that they wanted to survive, or was it maybe that they found safe comfort in the presence of one who seemed never afraid, never at a loss for hope. Jesus was not afraid of the elements. He communed with God in the elements. He was at peace with the elements and in prayer with the One from whom the elements draw their existence. Jesus was a God presence to them. This Abundance was with them. They were not alone. They were with friends. The water and wind are not strangers to Jesus. Even hunger was a friend.

In this Gospel lesson, we have the dual lessons of trust and presence. The disciples are learning that they can always trust, and God is always present. Perfect freedom. Jesus has learned that enemies, whether natural or human, are always potential friends to be treated as such.

Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) was a Byzantine Christian monk who lived 1000 years ago. He discovered what the disciples were learning in today's Gospel lesson. Jesus is the presence of God-- present in us. Hear his words:

We awaken in Christ's body,  
As Christ awakens our bodies  
There I look down and my poor hand is Christ,  
He enters my foot and is infinitely me.  
I move my hand and wonderfully  
My hand becomes Christ,  
Becomes all of Him  
I move my foot and at once  
He appears in a flash of lightning.  
Do my words seem blasphemous to you?  
--Then open your heart to Him.  
And let yourself receive the one  
Who is opening to you so deeply.  
For if we genuinely love Him,  
We wake up inside Christ's body  
Where all our body all over,  
Every most hidden part of it,  
Is realized in joy as Him,  
And He makes us utterly real.  
And everything that is hurt, everything  
That seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful,  
Maimed, ugly, irreparably damaged  
Is in Him transformed.  
And in Him, recognized as whole, as lovely,  
And radiant in His light,  
We awaken as the beloved  
In every last part of our body.

Another thought from Ephesians 3.20—Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

This power at work is the presence of Christ in us. It is trust. It is hope. In this power we can rest and know that all is well. Thanks be to God.