

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole CA

The 11th Sunday after Pentecost: August 4, 2024

“Do you Hunger?”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost. Last week most church congregations read about Jesus feeding the crowd with only five loaves and two fishes. Today we have (how should we put it?) the morning after.

What seems to be happening here is Jesus has just fed a large group of people gathered to hear him. However, the motivation of the listeners shifted from searching for spiritual enlightenment into greed. The crowds began pursuing Jesus because they wanted him to keep providing them with free bread. Who can blame them? Imagine how much easier life would be if you had an endless supply of free bread appear on your doorstep each morning!

While they are looking for someone to feed their stomachs, Jesus was talking about providing them, and therefore us, with something to satisfy a much deeper hunger. Jesus wanted to give us something that will feed our hungry hearts and souls, not just our stomachs.

We all have hearts that are hungry for something. For example, I have come across a few authors who say that every person is looking for answers to three fundamental questions: Who am I? Where do I fit? What am I here for? These questions of identity, belonging and purpose can be thought of as hungers we experience. We can also be hungry for things like acceptance, self-worth, peace, rest and hope as we contemplate our futures.

When we try to satisfy these deeper hungers in ways that give us short-term relief, do they really satisfy? Our consumer culture offers us temporary solutions that help to distract us from our deeper hungers, but yet, they never fulfill them. Jesus provides what our hearts and souls might be hungry for. If we're hungry for identity, Jesus give us a new identity as children of God whom he loves and with whom he is pleased to have join in his kingdom. If we're hungry to belong,

Jesus gives it to us by making us members of his body, as brothers and sisters in God's family, to live out our identity in Christ-centered community, often called church. If we're hungry for purpose, Jesus calls us to participate in God's mission by being disciples who make other disciples with the purpose of bettering humanity through redeeming, restoring, and renewing relationships including all of creation.

Whatever our deeper hunger might be, Jesus feeds us through the power of his Spirit via the gospel. Jesus accepts us just as we are as a free act of grace. Jesus gives us value by telling us we're worth dying for by giving his life for us on the cross. Jesus gives us peace as he establishes a new relationship between us, our heavenly Father, and each other. Jesus gives us rest as he carries our burdens for us through prayer and the love we experience in the Christian community. The resurrection of Jesus feeds us with hope as he promises that no matter how difficult or dark life might appear, he has given us a life that not even death, can overcome. No matter what our hearts and souls might be hungry for, Jesus can provide us with what we need.

Our call each Sunday is to help each other grow in faith and the journey begins by honestly asking ourselves what our hearts and souls are hungry for. This can really challenge us and might require some soul-searching, because often we're not too good at admitting our hunger. We can be very good at masking it with superficial attempts at filling the holes. However, when we are able to recognize and admit our deeper hungers, when we are able to find that Jesus can and will satisfy those hungers, then we are able to share that bread with others.

We become like Jesus' disciples who received the loaves and fish that Jesus had blessed and distributed when we share communion. It may only seem like a morsal and a sip but it contains all there is to fully express what Jesus means to us. To come to the table not only for solace, but for strength.

When we have fed on the Bread of Life and found his goodness for ourselves, we have something good to share with others - the good news that Jesus offers us life to the fullest here and now as we trust in him for everything to satisfy the deeper hungers of our hearts and souls.

When we have found this Bread for ourselves, we can distribute it to others who are hungry for the goodness of God in their lives too.

“We must no longer be children tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.” Ephesians 4:14-16

What is your heart hungry for? Have you been tossed to and fro in your faith? What might be missing in your life that is keeping you from living your life to the fullest that Jesus promises? If your honest answer is "nothing", that your relationship with Jesus is strong and you're finding everything you need in him, then praise God! Because you have something to offer the people around you who do have hungry hearts. This is the calling of continued growth in the Spirit, which is also known as ministry.

If however, you have a hunger that you can't fill, then let me know and let me help you find how Jesus can satisfy that deep hunger. Or bring your concern to a Christian sister or brother, who can help you. Search the Bible, listen to what God promises you in his word. Bring your hunger to God in prayer and keep pursuing the goodness of God in Jesus, the true Bread of Life. Amen