

The Bread of Life

Sunday, August 2, 2015, 10th Sunday after Pentecost, John 6:24-35

Rev. Doug Abbott

Last week, Pam and I spent four days in a lakeside cabin on Thompson Lake in Oxford, Maine with my daughter Lynne and her family, including her two children David (14) and Sarah (12). It was a relaxing time, enjoying the natural beauty of the lake and taking in the freshness of the air. One late afternoon, we were sitting by the lake and 100 yards out on the lake appeared a loon, calling. In the Sunday newspaper for Lewiston-Auburn Maine appeared this poem.

Listening for Loons by Gary Lawless

i

wild roses down

to the water

one loon alone

northeast of the island

cedarscent

ii

water lily or

loon white

on the water both

bright

flowers flowers

on the surface of

this world

iii

like loons we dive under

dive under and

come up somewhere else

iv

every night now

i listen for loons

to hear their voices

to leave this body

to return to stars

The lake provides much needed rest and relaxation. Nature cannot fully provide for our renewal. I will explain why after our prayer. Let us pray.

Dear Lord,

The words of Isaiah are upon us to seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near. We are seeking you this morning and you are near to us now in this sanctuary. We come to you seeking your renewal in our lives. Amen.

Nature cannot fully provide for our renewal. We need more. We need the renewal from God as primary. God came to us as a human being, Jesus of Nazareth. His love, caring and healing sustain us.

In Maine, Pam and I visited with my oldest brother Bruce and his wife Barb. They live year round on Thompson Lake. Three years ago he suffered a second heart attack, followed by a stroke, followed by quadruple by-pass heart surgery. He no longer is able to drive. But he did manage to beat me in two games of cribbage. My other brother Gordon has had heart by-pass surgery, a heart valve replacement and is living with Parkinson's disease. He and his wife Judy are still very active.

My daughter Lynne, and her two children, David 14, and Sarah 12 were with us at the cabin. Lynne is still suffering from the effects of previous concussions and has to take time out during the day to be quiet and rest her mind. And we are caring back home for Pam's mother who will soon be 97 and is residing at a residential nursing care facility. God is with all of us through our Lord with His love, nurturing and strength.

And we need to pay attention to what He is teaching us.

Stephen Carter writes in the Bloomberg Review that first lines make a difference in capturing the interest of the reader of novels. He cites that "Harper Lee won't need a great first line to sell a gazillion copies of "Go Set a Watchman", her old-new novel. But she's written one anyway".

"SINCE ATLANTA, SHE HAD LOOKED OUT THE DINING-CAR WINDOW WITH A DELIGHT ALMOST PHYSICAL."

"With a single smooth sentence, Lee has set her readers in motion, on a train, rocking our way across Georgia in the company of the protagonist. She has us eager to read on."

The first line in today's scripture lesson reads:

“So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.” This first line has the same effect. It captures our interest in what the Lord offers us. It makes us want to read on.

Why do you suppose all these people sought Jesus? He brought life to them. They all were seeking to be healed, to be restored, to have hope. They thronged to see him.

We seek him too. This is why we are here in worship this morning. We want to receive God’s healing spirit and be restored to life.

Jesus’ words to the crowd are powerful. “Do not labor for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you.” “My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.” His bread gives life to the world. Then Jesus says to them, “I am the bread of life.” The Father is working through him.

Oh how the world yearns for this now, the bread of life, life that is from God and not from demonic forces. And we in our own lives and homes need this now. It is so easy for our beliefs to be eroded and corroded, tempered and diluted. This is what we are praying for this morning, for each of us here, for our church, and our world, that life that is from God become strengthened in us.

Our vitality comes from God. Our energy comes from God. Our purpose for living comes from God. And when it gets tarnished or worn down or neglected, we need to have it restored.

Just this past week, we have been disturbed as a society by the events regarding Samuel DuBose in Cincinnati and Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe. And a third event needs to be added. The news reported this morning of

the shooting death of a police officer in Memphis Tennessee after stopping a car for a traffic violation.

All of us are affected by these senseless acts.

Roxanne Gay in her Op Ed column, “Of Lions and Men”, in the N.Y. Times (8/1/15), cites the senseless deaths of them. She raises the questions as we talk about injustice, “What do we do? How do we move forward? How do we create change?”

Before we start doing something and taking action, a first step is involved. We need to move upwards to God before moving forwards. This is our direction this morning as we prepare for communion. We turn to God the giver and source of life to not only guide us through these times but also sustain us through Christ, the bread of life.”

Pedro Martinez, in his induction into the Red Sox Hall of Fame this past week before a full house at Fenway Park, in his acceptance speech, his first line was, “I thank God for giving me life”. We need to start out connected to the love and justice of God to mobilize us into action.

The sacrament of communion is the most sacred way God restores our life. His words are with us. “Do this in remembrance of me.” The spirit of God comes to us where we are. Its power is not based on how we feel or any of our senses. It is based on our participation.

There are two aspects of our participation that are expected of us.

The first part is to receive. In partaking of the bread and the cup we are infused with the attributes of Christ. We are in the field of grace when we receive his love, forgiveness, faith, teachings, and strength. We are inviting him into our home. He is our guest. As friends, we are sitting at the table with him in a spirit of hospitality. The bread and wine are blessed by him.

I can only receive. I acknowledge that I am not the source of Light. It is only God through His Son that gives me life and restores my life. It is with gratitude and humility that I receive. Grace is about being. I am not here to earn credits towards my salvation or towards eternal life, but to receive Jesus' goodness.

The second aspect of communion is for me to bestow, to receive in order to bestow. This action is a bond of mutual love where we are transmitting this love of God and Christ to others without expecting anything in return. The reward is in the act of giving, of being uplifted by receiving the love of Christ and then doing the same for others.

Enter now into the Sacrament of Communion with the belief that Jesus is with us, the Bread of Life. He restores our life and leads us into bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. Amen.