

Every worship, we begin by pouring the waters into the Baptismal Font. I felt GOD's Call to serve you in part because that was already the practice before I came. For me this began decades ago, when asked "What do you do with the Baptismal Font when there is no Baptism?" Our occurrence of Baptism is rare. Even more, this out-pouring became a commissioning at the start of worship, like the Charge and Benediction at the end. "We have come to this time and place, from a world constantly taking in the cacophony of sound, of information, news and stuff, until we can receive no more; in our abundance we can not appreciate one thing more. Centering ourselves to Worship God, we first empty ourselves of that abundance. Then search to feel, what it is to yearn and hunger, breaking the fast by first receiving the Peace of Christ, the Assurance of Forgiveness, and the Word of God."

There are several stories, so familiar, we know them by the opening lines: Can you guess these?
In the Beginning, GOD created, as the world was a formless, shapeless, void, darkness covered the deep.
A new King, came to power in Egypt, dealing shrewdly with the Israelites, who had become numerous.
Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.
The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah: Prepare the way...

This morning we have one verse from 2nd Samuel 11, that ought to send a shiver down our spines.

In the Spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David remained in Jerusalem...

This was a time of prosperity and abundance. Finally, the Nomads, the escaped SLAVES, the people fighting for survival, possessed an abundance of everything they wanted or needed. Life in the Promised Land was paradise. When we have such abundance that we do not appreciate, cannot enjoy all there is, trouble tends to follow... In the time Kings Go to War, David sent General Joab, all the King's men, the whole Israelite army went out to besiege Rabbah... David remained in Jerusalem...

This is a story of a Mid-life crisis. This is the story of the Fall of a King; of David's lust, David's seduction of Bathsheba, David's murder of Uriah for being her husband. The King took for granted the gifts of GOD, took for granted all the abundance that had been given him. David could not let others enjoy their lives, for he perceived ABUNDANCE as all being FOR him, without consideration of the effects of his actions on Bathsheba, on her husband, on the Nation, on GOD! King David had such abundance, he took whatever he desired and only feared those in his way.

Like the distinction between HUNGRY PUPPIES and a FINICKY KITTEN, there is a difference between our perception of the world as a Limited Resource, competing to get ours before others can; versus believing Creation is an ABUNDANCE. If the world only possesses Limited Resources then we are willing to steal and take what we want, we make rocks like Diamonds, Silver and Gold more precious than Granite and Quartz. If Creation is a gift of Grace from GOD, then like us/the World is a living thing co-existing with all Creation. What is at stake is no longer how little of a dwindling resource we can possess; instead, to consider what we might be able to do, what GOD could do to make a difference. One is a very mortal fear, the other a divine act of faith and trust.

The account of Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount /Feeding the 5,000 is recorded in all the Gospels, in two of them, the feeding story even occurs twice! Since the end of May we have been following the narrative through MARK, suddenly this week and until September, we follow JOHN. Even if we did not have that identification in the Bulletin, or from our Liturgist: by verse 2 that this is from JOHN should jump out at us, because this is no longer about EVENTS in JESUS' MINISTRY. PEOPLE FOLLOWED JESUS because they saw the SIGNS he had MIRACULOUSLY PERFORMED. From now on, according to JOHN, everything is going to be a SIGN, SIGNS which point to a DIFFERENT REALITY, A HIDDEN TRUTH.

It is a misreading of John to get caught up in questioning the irrational non-scientific reality of miracles. DIVINE INTERVENTION happens. MIRACLES are not Magic which occurs because the Magician tricked us, because the Magician spoke the right WORDS as an Incantation, or hid behind a curtain. If we try to interpret SIGNS as MIRACLES, it is like trying to explain a JOKE, or going to a fine RESTAURANT getting caught up reading the menu and speculating about the calories and gluten, rather than enjoying the sights, smells and tastes that are the pleasures of Life! Asking if this person was saved or healed by GOD, only begs the question why another person in the same circumstance died or was not saved. SIGNS are to be taken as Something Miraculous, that GOD IS IN CREATION. In this case, the SIGNS point to a FEAST OF ABUNDANCE from JESUS: EAT, ENJOY, do not try to control or make this fit something. In NO OCCURRENCE IN HISTORY has Jesus ever used a MIRACLE to point to his greatness! There are countless DIVINE INTERVENTIONS, but always pointing away from the individual, toward GOD'S MERCY.

This event takes place on a MOUNTAIN. Mountains are wilderness, rough places, what in many cultures are named as THIN PLACES, where the FIRMAMENT between the abundance of the HOLY SPIRIT and CREATION touch.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus entire Ministry was 12 months, according to John Jesus' Ministry includes 3 PASSOVERS, 3 years, with growing intensity. So identification that the FEAST OF PASSOVER was near ought to trigger us to LISTEN: that GOD'S GLORY will be revealed in a MEAL, with the final PASSOVER at Maundy Thursday and Good FRIDAY.

For JOHN's Gospel, BREAD is also a Trigger Word. Jesus asks "Where they can get BREAD for the people to eat?" Phillip responds questioning the PRICE... If Philip had been able to pass Jesus' Quiz he would have recognized Jesus is the BREAD of HEAVEN, Bread of LIFE, COMMUNION. The remainder of this story, while not specifically about COMMUNION, is about WHERE BREAD COMES FROM, At what COST, and also How abundant Blessings are to us.

Another element that almost goes unnoticed in John's telling is CONCERN the ABUNDANCE of FRAGMENTS NOT BE LOST. Again, this is not to make scientific numeric sense. How could five small Barley loaves generate 12 Baskets Full of Remnants? No, the point is that Jesus will continually be concerned with SAVING that which was perceived as LOST, the LOST COIN, LOST SHEEP, PRODIGAL SON, and here, that the leftovers be not lost.

Finally, what troubles me most about this passage, as many times as we each have read it, I am certain I have at least 1000. We pay attention: to how many people; their hunger; the child who offers 7 things; Jesus had the people sit down; Jesus took the loaves and fish and distributed to those who were seated, as much as any wanted... but there was one thing we regularly overlook: JESUS GAVE THANKS TO GOD.

For nearly 20 years, we as a Church were losing people, we were overspending our resources, we were going the way of so many churches in the world, and recently, we have witnessed something different: ABUNDANCE! There is no reference that ANDREW, Simon Peter's brother ever thanked the boy whose lunch he took! There is no identification PHILLIP who was incredulous How they could ever afford to do this, ever gave thanks to GOD.

I hope and pray that this week, we stop to recognize just how blessed we are to live in PARADISE, to enjoy GOD'S ABUNDANCE, to be able to make a difference in others' lives. That in a Season when all the world is preparing to go back to work in the Fall, so many of us are able to live in ABUNDANCE.

If we do not STOP in SABBATH at that, to THANK GOD and to question "What do we yearn for?" is it another person's partner, is it their possessions, is it their life, OR do we yearn for GOD to be present in our lives?