

Do you have a relationship with God? Do you trust God? I am not asking if we believe in God; or if we scapegoat God, blaming God for suffering. More even than if you believe in Miracles... Do we trust God can intercede and provide hope for us? What must we do in response to God? What must we do, to be doing, the works of God? How do we trust?

A few weeks ago a couple caught me at Coffee Hour, saying: "We were here years ago when everything went to hell in a handbasket. We were involved in the church but did not know anything was going on. You were not here at the time, but could anything have been done by anyone? Was this just a train wreck that had already left the station?" Do miracles no longer happen? Could not even God have entered in?

Both of these questions are addressed in this morning's reading from John 6. Not surprising because the 6th Chapter of John has 77 verses, is the longest chapter in the Gospels and seems to address everything under the sun! We began this story several weeks ago, and thankfully the next 3 weeks Pastor Diane and Katie Sayre will leave the lectionary interpreting Scripture from their Greek adventure with Paul's letters. To Recap, after Jesus' Baptism by John, he went to a wedding where the BLESSING OF WINE had run out. Jesus' 1st miracle was creating LIVING WINE. He told many parables and healed many people, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Then coming to his own town of Capernaum, his own family and neighbors, those whom he had gone to worship with, doubted and rejected him. REJECTION is one of the most painful and difficult of emotions, rejection turned outward is ANGER and ANGER turned inward becomes DEPRESSION. There was little Jesus could do among people who did not believe or trust. Jesus sent his disciples out into the world in pairs. The Apostles returned to Jesus filled with excitement that they had preached and taught, cured diseases and demons. Preaching sermons of COME & SEE, they were followed to Jesus by thousands. When the apostles had nothing more to give them, Jesus' 2nd Miracle was FEEDING the 5000. He took bread and looking up to heaven offered a prayer called the Eucharistesantos, not "the Eucharist" but sharing a BLESSING OF FOOD like that. Last Sunday, Pastor Diane described the Apostles entering the storm, JESUS WALKING ON WATER and their inviting Jesus into their boat.

This passage begins with subtly. The crowds who had gathered the day before, knew Jesus had not gone with the Disciples, and like "all Judea and Galilee went out to see John the Baptist in the Wilderness," they cross over...Imagine 5000 people in boats "crossing from the non-Jewish to the Jewish side to seek Jesus."

Where are they now? Right back at Jesus' hometown of Capernaum! And the unspoken question is "HAS ANYTHING CHANGED?" Capernaum had been a place of disbelief, will the 5000 from out there trust Jesus, where locals had not? Jesus, whom the day before had COMPASSION on them, TAUGHT them, FED them, HEALED them, now CONFRONTS them as having the faith of Nicodemus. You remember Nicodemus, a respected Teacher and Pharisee, who came to Jesus in the shadows of Night to say "We know you come from God because of the things you do, but WHO are you?" And Jesus replied that Nicodemus a Teacher of the Law did not understand RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, that you had to be Born of the Holy Spirit, from Above. Jesus looks out at the 5000 and hears them asking "So are there any leftovers from last night?" Jesus replies that once again they did not understand. The 1st Miracle was A BLESSING OF LIMITLESS WINE. The 2nd Miracle had been given to them A BLESSING OF LIMITLESS FOOD. Instead of receiving BLESSINGS of Wine and Bread as LIFE and THANKSGIVING, Recognizing RELATIONSHIP TRUSTING GOD they only could see JESUS CAN SATIATE OUR HUNGER. Do it again.

Have you watched the television show AMERICA'S GOT TALENT? I grew up with the Ed Sullivan Show, this is like a Talent Show on Steroids, literally with death defying acts, the prize for winning is \$1,000,000 plus head-lining a show in Las Vegas! But over the years, the Judges have acquired a mantra. If they get bored they eliminate the person; but if they like what they saw, they demand "DO IT BIGGER" "MORE

DANGEROUS" "WOW US!" Here, the crowd is saying to Jesus, "You satisfied our hunger last night, What else have you got?"

Searching for a sign to prove who Jesus is, demanding a miracle on their terms, the crowd remember that Moses gave their ancestors Manna each day, but did so for 40 years! In essence they are saying "Can you top Moses?"

To which Jesus gives several answers:

The first of which is "It was not Moses who gave bread to you daily, way back then; it was and is God who gives you everything you need now and for ever." Jesus made distinction between Moses and God as the source of Life, and between Moses in Past Tense and God in the Past, Present and Perpetual Future.

Also, that there is distinction between MANNA which satiates your hunger for a day, and the BREAD OF HEAVEN that will satisfy your needs for all time.

At which like Jesus saying to Nicodemus "You Must be Born Again," which also means "Born from Above" "Born of the Holy Spirit"; Jesus says to the masses an enigma "I AM the Bread of Life! The Bread of God is that which comes down from Heaven giving life to the World." And the people reply that is Hard to Believe

Now the Gospel of John has an overload of nuances that ought to shout out at us like Flashing Neon Lights. If you had your Bibles open, the beginning of Chapter 6, referencing the lake the masses crossed seeking Jesus, John calls it The Sea of Tiberias, which is the Roman Name, so one of the things going on in this Chapter is whom do you trust to control your life? Does this lake belong to The Empire of Rome or to God? Verse 2 foreshadowed, by saying "A multitude followed Jesus, because they saw the SIGNS which he did, so the people will be seeking MORE BIGGER SIGNS.

Verse 4 gives us a reference, when did this take place? "The Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand."

In our passage today, the Bible in our Pews has tried to make the Bible grammatically correct! Verse 32 which begins "I tell you the truth, it was not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven..." please cross out the phrase "I tell you the truth." There has been far too much argument over the TRUTH. In the Revised Standard version, most of us grew up with, Jesus would say "Truly, Truly, I say unto you;" however the original Greek of the Gospel of John was even more Dramatic Jesus saying: "Amen, Amen." Now we might say, "So what," except for John, this is like Arrows pointing to something really important, because at John 3, describing to Nicodemus: relationship to God; And Chapter 8 describing the True descendants of Abraham; Chapter 10 describing the Good Shepherd; Chapter 13 washing the Disciples feet at the Last Supper; and in the final resurrection appearance to Simon Peter, at all of these descriptions about our RELATIONSHIP TO GOD through Jesus, Jesus says "Amen, Amen;" then JOHN ends the whole Gospel with a single "Amen."

In like manner, as Jesus says "I AM the Bread of Life!" Remember when Moses encountered A Burning Bush, the sacred name of God given to Judaism for all time was "I AM," which grammatically is the Verb of Being, so God is in all things, HOWEVER Jesus was connecting Jesus' Being the Bread of Life with God."

Many of you watched the video recording of my preaching at Trinity Presbyterian Church before coming here; I also was able to watch a rare video recording of you, before we began video recording and broadcasting on a regular basis. That was a recording of Pastor deLong's Celebration of Life, where Pastor John Dunham identified himself as Pastor deShort. What I witnessed there and what I have witnessed coming to be one among you, is that God was in Pastor Larry, and Larry is now with God. "I AM" is with each of you. It was a train-wreck that was gaining speed and nothing could stop. But the miracle is that

that circumstance, caused this body of Christ to recognize we had to change, and continually changes all of us in the ways we relate to one another, including those who were not even here at the time.

The clearest most direct statement, according to John, from Jesus, of what is required to “be doing the works of God” is that You believe in God and in the one whom God sent, that you trust in God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. That sounds so simple. Then again, in the first Work of God, all God did was to say: “Let there be Light”