



**SAINT JAMES'**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
Fremont, California

## SERMON

9 August, 2009. Pentecost 10, Proper 14B

Title: "Have Yourself a Great Lunch!"

Text: St. John 6:37-51

J.J.



"Loaves and Fish"  
Tabgha Mosaic, 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE

"I am the bread of life . . . Whoever eats of this bread will live forever." For several weeks now, the appointed Gospel reading for the Sunday has come from the 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. John (and we have two more Sunday's to go . . . the "pericope pickers" thought it was that important a Chapter . . . and I agree!). The chapter begins with the feeding of the 5000, an important story which appears in all four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. John 6:1-21, the feeding of the 5000, was the Gospel we were suppose to read on our name's day celebration, but instead we chose the Gospel reading for the Day of St. James' (which was appropriate). But, in many ways we carried out the appointed Gospel reading—the feeding of 5000—with our Festival of Nations Potluck . We probably didn't have twelve baskets left over . . . but we sure had a lot. What a fantastic celebration.

The 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, however, quickly moves from the feeding of the 5000, to some very serious, in depth, theological conversation, as the Gospel of John is want to do. Some biblical scholars see this sixth chapter as John's attempt to say something about the institution of the Holy Eucharist. It's interesting, that John's focus at the Last Supper is not on the Eucharist or the Words of Institution, but on Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. There's not a word about Jesus taking bread and wine . . . and speaking of them as his body and blood. Not a word! But here, John clearly talks about Jesus as "the bread of life" . . . that "bread which comes down from heaven . . . and whoever eats of it shall not die" . . . and that bread, says John, that bread which Jesus "gives for the life of the world, is his very own flesh." Next Sunday (and yes, this is like the previews you see at the movies) . . . next Sunday, all of that is going to erupt into a huge controversy. So, Come and hear!

But there are other ways to look at this sixth chapter. Some see this chapter as not talking about the Eucharist at all, but rather, talking about hospitality, about sharing with one another, like the boy who had the five barley loaves and two fish . . . What are they among so many? . . . Well, Jesus showed us . . . with everyone sharing, (and that is how some explain the miracle of the loaves and the fish), with everyone sharing, there were twelve baskets of food left over. Now as I studied these words, I began to think (and you've got to be careful when Kathy+ or I start thinking) . . . when Jesus talks about himself as the "bread of life" and that whoever eats, or might I say, whoever "shares" this bread of life with someone else, that person will live forever, or, another way of saying this, will learn how to really live life now. And that said a lot to me.

Let me share a story: When we lived in Chicago, my spouse worked for a very prominent lawyer, Susan Vance (I have her permission to tell this story). One day Suzie invited the two of us to have lunch with her. We all met at her office, and it was such a nice day, we decided that we should walk to one of her favorite restaurants at the John Hancock Building, a wonderful outdoor, sidewalk café. As we came to our destination, Suzie was approached by a street person. (Notice, he approached Suzie, a woman, who he must have thought would be an easy target . . . boy, was he mistaken!). "Lady, can you spare a buck . . . I need some food." Now, Jonathan and I, like our priestly comrades in the Story of the Good Samaritan, were prepared to "walk by on the other side," . . . but not Suzie. Suzie stops and asks the man: "What's your name?" And the man, cautiously said: "C-a-r-l-o-s." "I'm glad to meet you, Carlos." Now, being the good lawyer she was, Suzie continued her line of questioning: "When did you last eat?" There was a pause, and the man responded, "Yesterday, lady," not quite sure what this line of questioning was all about? "Oh," said Suzie, "and where was that?" . . . "Oh, Lady, I just want a buck for a cup of coffee . . ." And Suzie said: "Carlos, I don't give out money . . . but tell

you what . . . we're on our way to that outdoor café (pointing to the John Hancock Building) . . . "you're welcome to join us for lunch." And again, there was this shocked look of disbelief as Carlos tried to figure out what's going on. And Carlos says: "yeh, sure Lady . . . thanks a lot . . . and God bless" . . . and he turns away to beg from someone else. Suzie didn't move, but called after him: "Carlos, come on . . . have lunch with us." "Thanks, lady," and Carlos walked away.

The three of us made our way to the restaurant, and we were seated at one of those big umbrella tables, right next to the sidewalk, where we could see all of the hustle and bustle of North Michigan Avenue . . . a great location! Well, we had just finished placing our order, and were about to toast one another with a class of wine, when . . . all of a sudden . . . who should appear . . . ah, you guessed it . . . our street friend. He stopped right next to our table: "Lady . . . Lady, were you serious about lunch?" And Suzie got up from her chair, walked over to the little wrought-iron fence that separated us from the street, and said: "Of course, I was. Come and join us," and she motioned for him to come in. Well, you can imagine what happened next. Carlos walks into the café, and is immediately stopped by the maître'd. After a brief conversation, the maître'd comes over to our table, and tells us: There's this g-u-y over here who tells me that you've invited him for lunch. If you like, I'll get rid of him for you." And Suzie says: "Oh, no . . . that's our friend, Carlos . . . we're expecting him. Please show him over and bring a menu." Well, you could have picked the maître'd up off the floor. And very, VERY cautiously, the maître'd leads Carlos to our table, pulls the chair out for him, cautiously places a napkin on his lap and hands him the menu. Let me tell you, that's a day, I'll never forget . . . It was a great lunch!

Last Sunday, Kathy+ made a wonderful discovery about these Words from St. John's Gospel. She shared with us her insight about our eating of the Bread of Life, and when we do that that, she said, "we are the continuation of the Word made flesh" . . . "we are bread to be broken and shared!" (Like I said, you've got to be careful when Kathy+ or I start thinking). Indeed, we are the Body of Christ—the Bread of Heaven . . . the Blood of Christ—the Cup of Salvation. And, what God is calling all of us to do, is to share this "Bread of Heaven;" this "Cup of Salvation" with one another as we live out our daily life. That's exactly what Susan Vance was doing that day in Chicago . . . sharing herself with Carlos. And that's what God is calling you and me to do . . . we who eat this Bread and drink this Cup . . . God is calling us to share the richness of God's gifts with one another . . . and . . . with the Carlas' and the Carlos' of the world. And so . . . Have Yourself a Great Lunch! Amen

S.D.G.

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