

Trinity Episcopal Church

650 Rahway Avenue

Woodbridge, NJ 07095

Proper 15 (B)

Saturday, August 18, 2018

The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

DRAFT

5:00 PM Sermon

DRAFT

“Flesh and blood”

and

Christ Episcopal Church

2 Emerson Street

East Norwalk, Connecticut 06855

Sunday, August 18, 2018

8 AM and 10 AM Sermons

by the Rev. Joe Parrish

The Holy Gospel according to

John 6:51-58

Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying,

“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down

from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

Dear Lord, may we receive your living bread thankfully, and give more of it to others. Amen.

Last night I was working diligently at my summer job as the Administrator at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, and suddenly I felt starving. I had worked

constantly for ten hours since early morning, trying to get them ready for Sunday, putting the final touches on the bulletin, helping them reconnect their printer and computers to the new internet server, getting all the pledges and contributions recorded and up to date, and I ran out of food. By some coincidence I had not taken any extra food as I usually do, and after working ten hours straight without a break, I was famished. It was probably the first time in a very long while that I felt true hunger. It's not unusual for someone to

feel hungry, but try going without eating for even ten or twelve hours, and one feels true pangs of hunger. Of course, I was in the middle of one of the largest cities in the world, with restaurants abounding on every street, but I was in an area of the Big Apple where I could not call in for food readily, and I was isolated in a huge building on the second floor which had no doorbell. But mainly my problem was that I had so many challenges yesterday, during a loud recording session of a video movie in the room next door, that I really had no time

to stop and even call for a food delivery which I probably would not hear when it arrived. So, this unusual circumstance was a teaching moment for me.

How many times do I pass by a person begging on the street, thinking that what ever I give them will just go for something addictive but still trying to help. Yet, in many parts of the world there is true and unabashed hunger.

Many of the bus stops in that Manhattan neighborhood have a big sign pointing out that we Americans waste over a hundred pounds of food a year.

On a TED talk today I heard a Stanford University professor say she challenged her engineering students to be more creative, to look for more than a superficial solution to problems.

https://www.ted.com/talks/tina_seelig_the_little_risks_you_can_take_to_increase_your_luck?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_content=talk_of_the_week_button&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

And to demonstrate her thought, she gave teams of her students a challenge to

come up with the best idea for a new restaurant venture and the worst idea for a new restaurant venture. She took up all the best ideas and discarded them; then she redistributed the worst ideas back to a different team of students to see what they could do with the worst ideas. One of the worst ideas was to start a restaurant in a city dump using discarded food. The idea was redeveloped by one of the teams to begin to take up leftover food from some of the best restaurants in town when they were closing and then redistribute it to the various soup

kitchens. The venture was indeed established. It is called City Harvest in New York City and has various other names in other US cities: maybe you have heard of it.

At St. Bart's Church in Manhattan where I worked thirty years ago helping set up their soup kitchen, they go regularly to the bakeries in the city to get their best rolls and Danishes and other pastries at closing time, and now they feed twice a week four hundred starving people twice a week. And even at my former church in Elizabeth, St. Paul's in

Westfield goes every Sunday for decades to a bakery in Linden to bring two or three big bags of bagels to St. John's every Sunday, and St. John's feeds about 150 each Sunday with this food. Trinity Church here also earlier participated in the feeding program at St. John's once a month or so; I am not sure they have continued, but they were a part of a group of five Episcopal Churches who bring food at least once a month to St. John's, and all are fed every Sunday.

My Treasurer at St. John's was a social worker in Newark and he said,

“Joe, if someone comes by the church at any time, and they say they are hungry, offer them some bread. If they take it they are likely truly hungry.

We have organized feeding programs in many churches in the New York area, and I believe that is true in many other areas of the US. Oftentimes, the Episcopal Church has taken the lead; and even when they are not the leaders, they compliment others heartily.

At a church we supplied at for several months on Staten Island, every Sunday a team of parishioners would be found in

the downstairs kitchen making peanut and jelly and other sandwiches that they would take to the local food serving program.

Perhaps we are reminded of hunger every Lent when some of us do try to do a token of penance by going without food for a day or several hours. It does not take long to feel hunger pangs, does it? But for us religious types, it is the reminder to us of how important it is to become closer to God. Physical food is a doorway for us to see our absolute need for God, and especially for finding the

Holy Meal every week. Without eating the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, we quickly starve spiritually. Our lives become bleak. Our focus on the life we are trying to lead as Christians becomes blurry, and soon we simply lose touch with the Source of all Wisdom, the Taproot of all Forgiveness, the Fountain of all that is Good in Life, Life Eternal.

So, let us partake of the Bread that feeds our very souls, and the Blood that forgives all our sins, in the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit who heals, blesses, and

keeps us in the palm of God's mighty
Hand. Amen.

Description: In the Holy Food of the
Eucharist we find a true connection with
the Divine in our lives. With this Holy
Food our souls are refreshed.

Tags:

Bread, body, wine, blood, Christ, Jesus,
God, Holy, food, soup, kitchen, bagels,
Stanford, creative, idea, harvest, hunger,
Eucharist, Lent

St. Stephen's Episcopal Pro-Cathedral

35 S. Franklin Street

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania 17201

The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost:

Proper 15B

August 19, 2015

DRAFT

“Holy bread, holy people”

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

The Holy Gospel according to

John 6:51-58

Dear Lord, Please give us today our daily bread. Amen.

Only a few heart beats and breaths separate us from our final rest. But some are still not sure where they will land

after those few last breaths. To put all of our doubts to rest, Jesus says that whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood are already living in him and will never be separated from the Lord's presence. If you are uncertain of this great hope in Christ, today is for you. We want to give you the chance to experience first hand what eternal life feels like. It is what all Christians have, eternal, everlasting life throughout all eternity. Most of the world does not have this wonderful benefit—at last count there were about two billion with it

and five billion on earth without eternal life, a very sad statistic. So in those with whom we will come into contact today, approximately that same statistic will pertain—two with eternal life and five without. So, it is not difficult then for us to discern why the world looks so harsh and uncaring. Five out of seven really don't care about you or your real future or even their own. And even those who call themselves Christians may be among those five of seven, sorry to say. People want to 'look good' even if they are not indeed good. And surprisingly, we will

find among those who are not called Christians in name, that their faith and actions still follow teachings of Christ, and they will have our well being in mind as well as their own. So the title, “Christian,” can be deceptive. Even some who come to church really do not care any or much about Christ, but they want to impress someone else that they are really ‘good people’ even when their actions say otherwise.

And to confuse matters even more, even true Christians sin and do terrible things. They need forgiveness just as

much as any who are non-believers.

However, the Christians' remedy is the medicine of Christ—to confess their sins to God and to receive the blessed Body and Blood of Christ, and go out and sin no more.

It is far more understandable why we Christians want others to receive Christ into their lives, because when they do, our own lives become more livable; we can find a more peaceful relationship with them; our differences can be settled more easily, and in general both their life and our life will improve.

Jesus is the great giver of second chances. No other will be so forgiving and forgetting of our past as is our Lord. He is looking down on us at this very moment, guiding us in our hearts to be his chosen ones, his beloved followers.

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

We Americans watch an average of 28 hours of television each week. One mother's fear that her young son was watching too much television was finally confirmed when she overheard him praying, "Dear God, bless Mommy and Daddy," the little boy began. "And give

us this day our slow-baked, oven-fresh, butter-topped, vitamin-enriched bread.”
[from Paul Slansky, "The Clothes Have No Emporer," 1989, quoted in "Dynamic Preaching"]

What is the bread in today’s gospel that Jesus is speaking about us eating? Obviously he is referring to his sacrifice on the cross—his very body will be given for those who follow him—we consume his body on the cross, but then an amazing thing happens, we find that by looking on him as our Lord and Savior, he forgives us for crucifying him

daily in our less than Christian lives, and furthermore, Jesus even feeds us spiritually by his words and teachings, and he fills us with the joy and peace which those out in the world and away from Christ do not have. And as a symbol of our faith we eat the bread of his Eucharist and drink the blood of his offering when we come together to receive the Holy Communion. And we find this tiny piece of bread and this tiny sip of wine has filled us to overflowing for yet another week. It is an amazing miracle!

Maybe you have not experienced a famine of Holy Communion—I did for nearly thirty years. I was brought up in a tradition who only took Communion once every three months, if that, and it was at an evening weekday meeting that was not nearly as well attended as on Sundays. Communion was more of a secretive thing in my home church, sorry to say. And I found later in life that I was starving for Holy Food and Holy Drink. I have attended several megachurches in my lifetime; when the falderal is all over, one tends to go out

into the parking lot feeling that some how we missed something. And next week after the service we are feeling the same thing. This feeling is like being in a famine in a desert. Fortunately, I never have to go more than a week without Holy Food and Holy Drink. But all those in the giga/mega churches may be starving for the bread of life that brings us all understanding and all wisdom and all the fullness of life. And they are starving, starving, and famished for a piece of Jesus, not a happy clappy song, but an actual piece of the Risen Lord. It

is so sad to see folks who think they have it all when they are starving for the Real Food and the Real Drink. And no hand clapping, arm waving, or toe tapping can fill our needy stomachs or empty spirits. The thrill just wears off. And they don't even get stale bread.

But what we preach in the Episcopal Church and the Lutheran Church and the Moravian Church and the Old Catholic Church and the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and some other churches is: come here you starving ones—we have what you are looking for

but haven't yet found. We have the Real Jesus, his Body, his Blood. Come to the Real Rest Stop and be fed!

One day someone broke up some sort of light brownish packing material in the back parking area of the church I served at for 24 years. It looked exactly like bread. Even the pigeons landed and try to take bites. But it was an indigestible plastic, inedible, not filling, and likely very toxic. The pigeons quickly learned and flew away. But this plastic material didn't biodegrade, it just sat there and would forever unless the wind blew it

away, which one day it finally did. But it was ‘fake bread’, it would not fill, it would not satisfy, it would not nourish, it was inedible plastic, mimicking the form and appearance of bread, but with absolutely no nutritional value.

That is what life tends to be like when we do not receive Holy Communion at least once a week. We find that something is missing, something is wrong, something is out of whack. And when we starve ourselves for weeks or years, we become less loving, less caring, less concerned about the feelings

of others, and we become just as calloused as the rest of the world. But, we are Christians! So, what will be our witness to the world if we are not eating the Sacred Meal ourselves? If we don't eat, if we don't take Communion to be important, how can we expect others to be interested in the faith we have? We will have the exact same famished look on our face as does anyone else in the world. We need our weekly Eucharist!

One pastor who promotes weekly Communion writes: "What will Jesus be to you: an ornament on the hood of your

life, [or] the engine which gives you power and movement?”

(Thanks to Pastor Walter W. Harms)

<http://www.predigten.uni-goettingen.de/archiv-8/060820-5-e.html>

Evangelical Lutheran Pastor Edward Markquart writes: “A man was down, down in the dumps one day, and he said, ‘Markquart, I appreciate your sermons. They speak to my life. But to be honest, for me, they are up and down, good [sermons] and not so good ones. But I have found that the Sacrament of Holy

Communion is the one constant for my spiritual life. Forgiveness. Life. Eternal life. That is what I receive when I take Holy Communion.””

He said it well.

(The following story is adapted from one told by writer and pastor Chuck Swindoll.)

One day a soldier confined to a bed in room in a VA hospital with a very virulent disease realized his young son didn't have anything to remember him for, so he built his little boy a wooden truck and asked a nurse to carefully

sterilize it and wrap it up and have an orderly take it to his son downstairs when he came to visit with his mother. The soldier was able to look out of a window on a top floor down to the grass below where he saw the orderly give the truck to his son. Then he saw his son unwrap the gift, and his eyes got wide when he saw that wonderful little truck. He quickly hugged the truck to his chest. Meanwhile the father was walking back and forth upstairs waving his arms behind the window pane trying to get his son's attention. The little boy put the

truck down and reached up and hugged the orderly and thanked him for the truck. And all the while the frustrated father was going through these dramatic gestures, trying to say, “It’s me, son, I made the truck for you. I gave that to you. Look up here!” Finally the mother and the orderly turned the boy’s attention up to that high up window. It was then the boy cried, “Daddy! Oh, thank you! I miss you, Daddy! Come home, Daddy. Thank you for my truck.” And the father stood in the window with tears pouring down his cheeks.

We are like that little boy. We forget the One who is the source of all our blessings. We need to look up from time to time and give thanks. That's just what we do when we come to the Eucharist, we are giving thanks and praise to God who saves us, who forgives us, and who protects us. We need to give God all our thanks for giving his Son to die in our stead so we can have eternal life with Our Father which art in heaven. Amen.