

Sunday, August 6, 2023 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

In today's first reading God invites all who are hungry or thirsty to receive food and drink without cost. Jesus feeds the hungry multitude and reveals the abundance of God. At the eucharistic table we remember all who are hungry or poor in our world today. As we share the bread of life, we are sent forth to give ourselves away as bread for the hungry.

Prayer of the Day

Glorious God, your generosity waters the world with goodness, and you cover creation with abundance. Awaken in us a hunger for the food that satisfies both body and spirit, and with this food fill all the starving world; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Genesis 32:22-31

Jacob wrestled all night with God, and when God wanted to get away as dawn was breaking, Jacob would not let God go until God had blessed him. Jacob's name is changed to Israel to mark his new relationship with God as he enters the land. Jacob is astonished that he remains alive after seeing God face-to-face.

²²[At night Jacob] got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.²³He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." ²⁷So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." ²⁹Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. ³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." ³¹The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

Psalm 17:1-7, 15

I shall see your face; when I awake, I shall be satisfied. (Ps. 17:15)

- ¹Hear a just cause, O LORD; give heed ¹ to my cry;
listen to my prayer, which does not come from ¹ lying lips.
- ²**Let my vindication come forth ¹ from your presence;
let your eyes be ¹ fixed on justice.**
- ³Examine my heart, visit ¹ me by night,
melt me down; you will find no impuri- ¹ ty in me.
- ⁴**I have not regarded what ¹ others do;
at the word of your lips I have avoided the ways ¹ of the violent.**
- ⁵My footsteps hold fast to your ¹ well-worn path;
and my feet ¹ do not slip.
- ⁶**I call upon you, O God, for you will ¹ answer me;
incline your ear to me and ¹ hear my words.**
- ⁷Show me your marvelous ¹ lovingkindness,
O Savior of those who take refuge at your right hand from those who ¹ rise against them.
- ¹⁵**But at my vindication I shall ¹ see your face;
when I awake, I shall be satisfied, behold- ¹ ing your likeness.**

Second Reading: Romans 9:1-5

This begins a new section in Paul's letter in which he will deal with the place of Israel in God's saving plan. He opens by highlighting how Israel's heritage and legacy include being God's children, having God's covenants, being given God's law, participating in worship of God, and receiving divine promises.

- ¹I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit—
²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were
accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the
flesh. ⁴They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving
of the law, the worship, and the promises; ⁵to them belong the patriarchs, and from them,
according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21

After John the Baptist is murdered, Jesus desires a time of solitude. Still, his compassion for others will not allow him to dismiss those who need him, and he is moved to perform one of his greatest miracles.

¹³Now when Jesus heard [about the beheading of John the Baptist], he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

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Prayers of Intercession

Confident that God receives our joys and concerns, let us offer our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

You gather your church together by the Holy Spirit. Inspire all the baptized to proclaim your abundant love throughout the world. Guide us in the mission of the gospel through word and deed. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You cherish your creation, from the smallest microbe to the largest mountain. Protect fragile ecosystems, send favorable weather, supply food and water to nourish creatures, and raise us up to care for all you have created. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You desire peace and justice in the world. Instill within all political leaders your desire, support the work of international peace organizations, and provide relief for those in war-torn areas (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You comfort those who are hurting. Accompany those who are alone, heal those who are sick, provide for all who hunger or thirst, console the bereaved, bring joy to the sorrowful, and attend to all who call on you (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You place us within communities for mutual support and love. Reveal yourself to us in worship, fellowship, and ministry with our neighbors. Provide for feeding ministries and food banks in our area, that we share your abundance with all who hunger. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You have placed before us examples of faithful living who have witnessed to your promises throughout time and space. Rouse us by their lives of service and dedication to be your hands and feet in this world. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, in the name of the one who reconciled all creation to himself, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

A reflection for this Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Abundance from Scraps

Jesus is able to feed us abundantly, even with scraps. He meets earthly needs by feeding the crowds and continues now to offer himself as holy meal, freely given to all, no matter their income or rank in society. Advertisers have trained us that what's proclaimed as FREE usually isn't. More often, it's a ploy to get our money for some other, larger, purchase. Today we are invited to trust and receive Jesus' free gift of love without mistrusting that he's got up his sleeve some scheme to swindle our money.

It can be hard to relax and trust God to take care of us and nourish us with the mere scraps we often see around us. We panic and take matters into our own hands instead of trusting. We experience that crushing sense of responsibility, not just to ourselves, but to our children or parents or other loved ones to keep them fed and clothed and healthy. Trusting as the crowd did that day seems completely foreign to those of us living in North America, abundant in resources.

With food freely given, with quantity enough to feed only a few, Jesus makes this miracle, and there are leftovers to clean up. But for most of us, belief comes slowly and warily when we've been burned by experience: how will there be enough for all of us, when we've been the last one at the lunch line, the late arrival at the party, and everything's gone? What if we see people in the crowd we don't want fed and jostle our way to the head of the line to get first choice? Will it be fair? Trusting that our daily bread and even our very lives are in God's hands is hard to do as we grow older and burdened by responsibility, but God has compassion for every member of the crowd, and we are blessed and invited to be joyful recipients of that generosity.

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