

October 5, 2014 “The Most Important Meal” John 6:25-40

In theological jargon we call the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke the synoptic gospels. That’s a complicated way of saying they give us an outline of Jesus ministry, times, dates, places, stories and teaching portions. Sometimes we say they tell the story of Jesus life, and frankly all we mean by that is that two of the three include birth stories. All three of them tell us how Jesus died, why Jesus died and to have as full an appreciation of the crucifixion and resurrection as you can, you need to consider all of the details the 3 accounts reveal.

There is an acknowledgement in the label....synoptic gospels that John’s account is different. And it is. He does not even try to tell us the story of Jesus birth, although as the caretaker of Mary, Jesus mother he probably knew more detail than either of Matthew or Luke. What he does do is this...he tells us the meaning of that birth, that the word of God so evident in the creation story of Genesis, became flesh and dwelt among us, Jesus the Son of God who is a man among men. And here in chapter 6 John is doing what he characteristically does....telling us stories about Jesus, but telling us what he remembers Jesus telling him, the disciples, the crowds about the meaning of those stories, and the events of His dynamic ministry.

Here is my routine. I will go home from here, and Barbara and I will take time and make time to have lunch together. She will eat two or three pieces of fruit with peanut butter providing the gluten free garnish. She will make me a sandwich. Tomato, onion, lettuce, some kind of garnish spread on the bread. We will talk about our morning experience. We will talk around the meal we share. It is an important time, in a hectic schedule on a day filled with activity. I make the observation that the meal times are the only times we seem to get time to talk about where we have been, and what we have experienced.

I share that slice of our family life for this reason: I want you to know that most meals are really important to me and I'm not just talking about the food when I say that. Meals are a time of refueling the body. Nutrition. But meals times for me, have a much greater significance than a chance to eat, energize and so on. So when I say that this taking of the bread and wine, the bread and grape juice here, is the most significant meal in which I and we participate I am reflecting what John tells us Jesus said about the sacramental realities of our faith life.

Jesus said, "Do not work for the food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you." The Son of Man is a phrase by which Jesus

identified Himself as the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Then the disciples asked Him a question. It goes to the very heart of everything we identify as being Christian. “What must we do to do the works God requires?” They recognized that Jesus was saying important things about Himself, about them, about God. And they seized that moment John tells us to go for it! Tell us what we have to do, to do what God wants of us. Jesus replied to the question asked. It’s a blockbuster! It is the heart of everything we call the Gospel and it is the one requirement to wear the badge or the label, Christian. He said, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.”

His critics and enemies are laboring to figure out how to be good men to please God, how to be good women, although there is no indication any woman was trying to trick Jesus or end His ministry. The Pharisees are continually trying to figure out how to be good, to achieve status and standing with God. So they reduce life to an activity of following the rules. Then you can keep score. Did it, did it, did it...oops gotta work on number 4. Jesus says forget about trying to be good. In fact He said no one is good except God. No one!

The work that God wants you to do, is not to tie yourself in knots trying to be the goodest person there is. (I know that’s bad grammer, but it makes a point.) You see the

best man who ever lived, is still a lost sinner. There is only one exception....Jesus, the one whom God sent to us, the one whom God wants us to believe.

The reason I call this meal the most important one, communion, the Lord's supper, the eucharist. All those terms apply. The reason I say this is the most important meal is that it is the one meal that is not about nourishing the body. No salad. No beef. No gravy. No desert. This meal is about one thing....believing in the One God sent to save us from our sinfulness. And that does not mean we understand the whole Bible, know the catechism, or have memorized the historical creeds and researched their meaning. It means we believe in Him. We believe in Him enough to gather together. We believe in Him enough to prioritize worshipping God...not just going to church, worshipping God. There is a difference. It means we know we are not "good people", implying we are better than some others. It means we know we need God. We need Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit. And all the labels mean the One real God who saves us because He loves us.

There is an old phrase in the worship literature of our denominational family, "fencing the table." I am not talking about fencing the table...keeping people away from it, or telling someone not to receive these symbols of God's redemption. I will say something even more revolutionary....if the idea of

God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ is in any way attractive to you....you are invited to receive and you should receive. That is exactly what this meal is about...serving God in faith. For some of us our faith seems at least to us to be small....Jesus said faith as small as a grain of mustard seed can move mountains.

I find it easy to affirm, this is the most important meal you will eat today. It is not about consuming a nutrition rich menu. It's not about your favourite food. It is about believing in the one whom God sent to redeem us...even us.....even me....even you.

I am going to lead us in prayer and then once again I will invite you to receive at the Lord's Supper. Let us pray.....

Lord our Redeemer;

Sometimes we make things very complicated. Jesus made complex questions simple. In the case of satisfying you in terms of how we should live, He said the most important thing we could do is to believe in the One you sent into the world to bear the cross, to die, to rise the 3rd day, to save us in every way a person can be saved. We bow before you, we worship you, because we cherish that possibility. In You O Lord we trust. Help our faith to grow and to expand as a result of what we do here in your name. Empower us to serve You and Your name when we are out in

the community and among other people. In Jesus name we ask
it. Amen