

“Lord, When Did You Get Here?”

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UCC at The Villages, FL
August 2nd 2015 ©
10th Sun. after Pentecost

Ephesians 4:1-16

John 6:22-35

*God's goal is for us to become mature adults – to be fully grown,
measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.*

Ephesians 4:13^b

Let us pray... O God,

Help us to set aside our scheming long enough to trust your guiding influence
in the midst of our lives – and in so doing build trust with one another.

Help us to recognize your presence even when it seems like you are absent.

Amen

The world is constantly scheming; You might even call it ‘atheistic living’ –
living as if survival only depended on what someone could do for themselves
without outside help, like even God.

In such a world, people are constantly scheming –
scheming to get someone's money, to protect someone's money,
to win someone's favor, to bypass someone's authority,
to hack into secret computer files and
to prevent that from happening with computer security,
to get land, to get influence, to ‘get over’...

It is said that there's no free lunch,
but there will always be plenty of people *working as hard as they can*
to prove that's wrong...

That's how Jesus read some of those people from the crowd that had followed him
out to his place of retreat on the far side of the Galilee,
whom he fed miraculously, and who had been resourceful enough
to find a way to get back in time to find him – and another free lunch.

The version of the feeding of the 5,000 in the Gospel of John assumes
Jesus accomplished this by supernatural means,
so these people were motivated to get another meal from him directly.
The missing ingredient in this meal – appears to be gratitude.

It is not clear if the whole crowd of 5,000 plus people
crossed over in boats to the Jewish Galilean side.

My thinking is that there were many boats, but not enough for 5,000 people –
so it was a significant number of them, but not all.

We need to leave room for the possibility that many of those among that multitude
actually did understand and appreciate what Jesus was doing.

Willard, p.2

There must have been enough who understood what Jesus was trying to teach them for there to have been the basis for a faith community that successfully branched out to form the early Christian churches.

The Apostle Paul used the metaphors of the Body of Christ and God in Christ to describe this fellowship we have with God and one another that Jesus called the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven.

Paul – like generations of believers since, up to and including us, did not have the same opportunities that the Apostles Peter and John had in being around Jesus firsthand.

There were lots of things the original disciples learned intuitively just by being around to watch what Jesus was doing as well as listen to what he said.

The Gospel lesson today provides an example of this effect he had on people by how they called the location of the miracle of feeding 5,000 in terms of how Jesus did what he did there.

As it says in John 6:23,

...boats from Tiber'i-as came near

the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

“The place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks” –

I am reminded of Native American words that carry a quality of meaning that contain a whole phrase or sentence in a single word.

An example of that is the name for a lake in New England called,

“Lake Chagoggagogg-manhauggagogg-chaubuna-gungamaug”

which locals in Webster, MA would say it means,

"You fish on your side, I'll fish on my side, and nobody fish in the middle"

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Chaubunagungamaug

We do not have the advantage of having been there like the disciples to see and hear such events take place,.

But we have the testimony of these Biblical narratives,

we have the traditions of our church, we have what generations of theologians have written and interpreted about God in Christ, and – like Paul, we have our encounters with God in the context of our own life experiences.

If we have been properly grounded in objective teaching about God in Christ and have experienced the Holy Spirit through the love in a healthy community, then what Paul said of the Church of Ephesus can be said of us:

As a result, we aren't supposed to be infants any longer

who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play

to deliberately mislead others.

Ephesians 4:14^b

Willard, p.3

It should be no surprise that religion like politics can be
twisted to serve the bias of limited worldviews for temporary goals
like land, money, influence, and power.

When we get drawn in to the hatred, anger, fear, despair of the world's scheming,
we are tempted to think it is all up to us to set things right – or worse,
to presume self-righteousness, and do it our way
at the exclusion of others.

Sometimes, it is up to us to take a stand for the sake of others –
even for the sake of those schemers of the world.

Jesus said to this effect in the Sermon on the Mount:

“God has made the Sun to shine upon the evil and the good,
the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

If you love only those who love you,
isn't that its own reward?

And if you welcome only those who are like you,
what is noble about that?

But perfect yourself in this way,
by practicing God's perfect way of loving-kindness.”

Love – love is how we keep in touch with the will of God.

Doing unto others as we would have them do unto us,
this is God's will, God's law to guide us in our choices
for what we say and do.

As the Apostle Paul said,

...by speaking the truth with love,

let's grow in every way into Christ, who is the head.

*The whole body grows from him, as it is joined and held together
by all the supporting ligaments.*

*The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love
as each one does its part.*

Ephesians 4:15^b-16

So, let us set aside our scheming long enough to trust God's guiding influence
in the midst of our lives – and in so doing build trust with one another
to become a beloved community of God in Christ.

And even when events would make it seem otherwise,
let us recognize that God is still present, still speaking,
and still acting in our world.

Amen

In our first scripture lesson, Ephesians 4:1-16, from the Common English Bible, the Apostle Paul describes the Body of Christ as a community of believers. Notice that he uses the phrase ‘speaking the truth with love’ as an integral part of what makes for the Body of Christ as a beloved community...

[1] Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God.

[2] Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love,

[3] and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together.

[4] You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope.

[5] There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

[6] and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

[7] God has given his grace to each one of us measured out by the gift that is given by Christ.

[8] That’s why scripture says, When he climbed up to the heights, he captured prisoners, and he gave gifts to people.

[9] What does the phrase “he climbed up” mean if it doesn’t mean that he had first gone down into the lower regions, the earth?

[10] The one who went down is the same one who climbed up above all the heavens so that he might fill everything.

[11] He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

[12] His purpose was to equip God’s people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ

[13] until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God’s Son. God’s goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.

[14] As a result, we aren’t supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others.

[15] Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let’s grow in every way into Christ,

[16] who is the head. The whole body grows from him, as it is joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does its part.

John 6:24-35

[22] On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

[23] However, boats from Tiber'i-as came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

[24] So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Caper'na-um, seeking Jesus.

[25] When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

[26] Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

[27] Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal."

[28] Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"

[29] Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

[30] So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform?"

[31] Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

[32] Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

[33] For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world."

[34] They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

[35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

Inspired by John 6:22-67

THE NEXT DAY, THE CROWD THAT STAYED ON THE OTHER SIDE
SAW THAT THERE WAS NO OTHER BOAT.

THEY HAD SEEN THAT JESUS DID NOT GO

WITH HIS DISCIPLES, BUT THAT THEY HAD GONE ON ALONE.

NOW BOATS FROM TIBERIUS CAME NEAR THIS PLACE –

‘THE PLACE WHERE THEY ATE BREAD

FOR WHICH THE LORD HAD GIVEN THANKS’.

AND SINCE THE CROWD SAW THAT JESUS WAS NOT THERE,

NOR HAD HE GONE WITH HIS DISCIPLES,

THEY GOT INTO THESE BOATS

AND WENT TO CAPERNAUM TO SEARCH FOR HIM!

AND THEY ‘HAPPENED’ TO FIND HIM

ON THE OPPOSITE SHORE AND THEY SAID,

“RABBI, WHEN DID YOU GET HERE?”

AND JESUS ANSWERED THEM,

“I AM TELLING YOU THE TRUTH, YOU SEARCHED FOR ME,

NOT BECAUSE YOU SAW SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT,

BUT BECAUSE YOU ATE BREAD AND FILLED YOUR BELLIES.

DO NOT WORK FOR BREAD THAT PASSES AWAY,

BUT WORK FOR THAT BREAD

THAT CONTINUES INTO ETERNAL LIFE,

WHICH THE SON OF MAN,

THE HEIR OF HUMANITY WILL GIVE YOU.

FOR ON THAT ONE HAS THE LOGO OF GOD BEEN STAMPED.”

SO THEY SAID TO HIM,

“WELL, WHAT SORT OF WORK IS IT TO DO THE WORK OF GOD?

AND JESUS ANSWERED THEM,

“THIS IS ‘THE WORK OF GOD’:

THAT YOU TRUST THE ONE WHO IS SENT.”

AND THEY SAID TO HIM,

“SO WHAT SPECIAL THING DO YOU DO THAT WE MIGHT TRUST YOU?”

“WHAT IS YOUR WORK?”

“OUR ANCESTORS ATE MANNA IN THE DESERT;

BECAUSE OF THIS IT IS WRITTEN:

‘BREAD FROM HEAVEN WAS GIVEN TO THEM TO EAT.’”

THEN, JESUS SAID TO THEM,

“I AM REALLY TELLING YOU THE TRUTH,

MOSES DID NOT GIVE YOU ‘THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN’;

RATHER ‘THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN’ CAME FROM MY FATHER,

THE BELOVED GUARDIAN.

FOR THE BREAD OF GOD IS THAT

WHICH COMES DOWN FROM HEAVEN

TO GIVE LIFE TO THE WORLD.”

THEN, THEY SAID TO HIM,

“LORD, GIVE US THIS BREAD ALL THE TIME!”

JESUS SAID TO THEM,

“I AM THE ONE WHO IS THE BREAD OF LIFE.

THOSE WHO COME TO ME WILL NOT STAY HUNGRY

AND THOSE WHO TRUST IN ME WILL NOT BE THIRSTY FOREVER.