

John 6: 24 – 35 – Signs of the Times  
Northminster / Newtonbrook United Church, August 2, 2009

There seems to be something deeply human about wanting “more.” That is illustrated in the story from John’s gospel that Ann read a few moments ago.

There is also something deeply spiritual in the answer from Jesus – a response that is both a gift and full of grace.

Let’s begin with some context. Remember the reading from last week. Jesus was confronted with a crowd of 5,000 hungry people. It was time to eat. The disciples located a young boy who had five loaves and two fish. Jesus thanked God, and distributed the five loaves and two fish. The story says that, “**when everyone had eaten their fill**”, they collected 12 baskets of leftovers<sup>1</sup>.

That happened on the day before the story in our reading today. We have picked up the story when the crowd has again found Jesus, this time on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Imagine that we are part of that crowd who have gathered to hear Jesus speak. He begins with a rather strange statement:

***“Truly, truly I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”<sup>2</sup>***

After a bit of back and forth conversation about DOING the work of God – which is recorded in the sixth chapter of John’s gospel, someone in the crowd asks;

***“Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform?”<sup>3</sup>***

Remember – these were the folks who the day before had seen a miracle happen – 5,000 people fed with five loaves and two fish. If you saw that happen, would you believe? These folks seemed to be following Jesus as if he were a rock star today, or a famous athlete. They saw Jesus in action and yet it seems that they didn’t believe that he was demonstrating the power and presence of God among them. They wanted, “a sign.” “Signs” are actions that have the potential of revealing God in order to generate belief. What more did Jesus have to “DO” so that they – and we – believe?

I think that there is something deeply human about wanting “more”; more proof of who Jesus is, for example – or is it denial?

---

<sup>1</sup> John 6:13

<sup>2</sup> John 6:26

<sup>3</sup> John 6:30

John 6: 24 – 35 – Signs of the Times  
Northminster / Newtonbrook United Church, August 2, 2009

The story of Thomas – who some call Doubting Thomas – in Chapter 20 of this gospel is another example of this human characteristic.  
“I can’t believe that it is you Jesus!”

If we fast forward to the conclusion of chapter 20 of John’s gospel, we can read the conclusion that says that the author could have written many more stories, **“but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.”**<sup>4</sup>

And then someone added Chapter 21, just to insure that we have “more.”

What are the “signs” that we ignore today?

- One could be climate change, or global warming. IF ONLY there were better scientific “proof”, then I would change my lifestyle .....
- Another could be the way that mainline churches are living today. IF ONLY we knew more about how to go into the future ....

Are there signs in our lives that we are ignoring, or are there things that we want more “proof” of in order to believe?

The message of Jesus is that we have been shown the sign – the proof – of God’s presence among us. God has already provided all that is needed for life and community. Now we are called to engage in the “work” that Jesus spoke about. Our souls are nurtured – fed you might say – by doing his work in God’s world.

Last week Rev. Irene Ty spoke about some ways that God’s work is being done;

- internationally through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank;
- locally through the Drop Inn at Newtonbrook.
- both congregations – Northminster and Newtonbrook - also engage in God’s work locally through support for refugee families and through donations to local foodbanks.

All of these “works of ministry” flow from the practical demonstration of Jesus feeding 5,000 people. In all of these our souls are fed because God has provided enough for all of God’s children. Through sharing, we can help others experience the abundance of life that Jesus spoke about in Chapter 10 of John’s gospel.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> John 20:31

<sup>5</sup> John 10:10

John 6: 24 – 35 – Signs of the Times  
Northminster / Newtonbrook United Church, August 2, 2009

Sharing is part of our worship because, if we believe that God is present in all of God's children, sharing the essentials of life – like bread – means that we are caring for God by caring for each other. We too can be a SIGN of God's presence in God's world. In fact, if the church is the Body of Christ, we are a sign of the presence of God. We have bread and love to share, by the grace of God.

What "sign" is God calling us to BE – as individuals and as a church?  
Remember, a "sign" is an action that has the potential of revealing God's presence in order to generate belief.

**HYMN # 563 – Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore**

John 6: 24 – 35 – Signs of the Times  
Northminster / Newtonbrook United Church, August 2, 2009

Prayers for God's Family & Creation

Giver of manna,  
may our deepest hungers be satisfied this day, this week, this month, and  
all through this earthly journey that you have given to us.

May we be, loving God, a sign of the world as your love would make it;  
a world where none go hungry  
a world of equitable distribution of incomes  
a world where people of different cultures, different faiths and different  
histories can live together with understanding and respect,  
a world where beauty is recognized as a sign of your love for all of  
creation;  
a world where we are all inspired to live in peace with justice,  
a world where we remember the horror and tragedy that happened on  
August 6, 1945 in Hiroshima, Japan.

We offer to you God the prayers that are written on our hearts....

Spirit of Life, may we be a sign of your new creation, as we live our faith in  
your world. Amen.