

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a  
Psalm 51:1-12  
Ephesians 4:1-16  
John 6:24-35

### **“The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven”**

Can you believe it? Here we are again, never satisfied. These folks, up on this hill, having just been fed by Christ in the feeding of the five thousand, are back again for more. Wanting more, seeking out Jesus, whom it seems, has got their number:

*“Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Don’t work for the food that perishes”* He tells them, *“but for the food of eternal life that the son of man will give you.”*

But they want a sign. They want some proof. (And how often do we also want a sign and some proof of God’s power in our lives?). They want some proof like the manna that was given them by Moses in the wilderness. Jesus tells them it was not Moses that gave them the manna, but God. And now he is the gift of manna, the living bread. This is hard to grasp, but after some wrestling they get it. They begin to understand what Jesus is trying to tell them, “Give us this bread always” they ask of him.

It seems to me that this message is right on cue for our world right now. In my own life there has been no better time to realize that the insatiable hunger for stuff, for material things, is a form of junk food and is far from satisfying. As Jesus says, it is food that perishes. How many of us have trimmed off some of the excesses in this economic downturn to discover that we are actually better for it? How many of us are spending more time on simpler things that are more rewarding and enriching? Looking beyond the me, me, me and the want, want, want for something that lasts and endures.

*“What must we do to perform the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”* “Believe,” Jesus tells us. That’s maybe easier said than done, especially when everything is shifting around us, not only in our economic lives, but also in our church life. This, after all, is the one place we’d like to have some stability, for things to feel the same, especially when everything else is tough.

In this time of transition here at St. Barnabas, Jesus is calling out to us more than ever to “believe”- to hold on even if we feel outside of our comfort zone. *“I am the bread of life”* he tells us *“whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”* Imagine how easy that’s going to be for a kid friendly sermon!

But that’s just it too. You see, sometimes it is the kids who get it. When I first came to the US, I was surprised to see the little kids taking Communion. In my country, you had to be confirmed first before you could receive. My daughter, Jessie was about

five, and she noticed the others taking the bread when she had to cross her arms for a blessing. She didn't think it was fair as the others were younger than her. I explained that you needed to know what you were eating, that it wasn't a snack. She then looked me square in the eye and said that the priest told us that it was "the Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven" and so what you were doing was eating Jesus and he was becoming a part of you. I gave in at that point.

In receiving the Eucharist we become a part of Him and he becomes a part of us and we are called to follow in his way. Listen to Paul: "*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ...for building up the body of Christ.*" My guess is that we have some prophets here, some teachers, maybe more than a few preachers, right? But truly, our gifts have never been more necessary than now, to build up the Body of Christ, to knit it together. That Body is you. Yours are the hands of Christ in the world, the feet of Christ, the eyes, the heart, because he becomes a part of you and you become an extension of Him. Consider what you do here, and I have found this out in one short week and I expect there is plenty more. You feed the hungry at Elijah's Promise; you open your arms to collect prom dresses for Hope's Chest. You give your time off to evangelize at the Vacation Bible Camp; you support those in need with school supplies, and heaven's above, you even built this church. But in addition to all these gifts, we will need the gifts of all the planners, thinkers, publicists, researchers, and historians among you to define who you have been, where you are now, and who you dare to hope to become as we go forward.

Paul it seems has a special plea for us as we do that: "*I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness; with patience; bearing with one another in love...*" Transition is not always easy. It will take all we have, all our gifts, our energy, our love, and all our belief because that is God's work for us right now – to believe.

We will need everyone who is a part of this parish family to become a part of the work; including those who may have fallen away, or withdrawn. If you know who they are, reach out, invite them to stop by and join the conversation. This conversation is going to be one of the most important in the life of this church. It is about who you are now and who you will need to lead you next. We need everyone's voice for we have work to do.

And each week, as we come to the Lord's table together and receive the Body of Christ, the Bread of heaven, we will know that we are a part of the Body of Christ that is St. Barnabas; we will know that as we do Christ's work in the world and here, that we are sustained by Him, strengthened by Him and that we are always succored by Him who loves us beyond our wildest dreams.

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