

Session Nine: Signs of Bread and Water Continued

Opening Prayer

John 6:1-15, multiplying the loaves John 6:16-21: walking on the water

Re:cap:

- Jesus has just fed thousands and thousands of people.
- They have reacted to him as a wonder worker which looks good at first but actually shows a less than sufficient faith.
- Evening falls. Now comes the crossing on the sea.
- The crowds stay, the disciples go into the boat, Jesus goes elsewhere
- The sign that is about to happen is not going to be shown to all the crowds- they do not have the benefit of it. The closest disciples will have this extra gift of a showing of his identity

The story:

- The evening hour, a time of gathering darkness and therefore a reminder of darkened understanding
- Jesus sends the disciples in the boat ahead of him over to Capernaum which is down the shore.

Once dark, the sea is stirred up and Jesus is not yet with them.

- After rowing for awhile they encounter Jesus coming to them on top of the water.
- Jesus is in total control.
- They are afraid: a lack of faithful understanding.
- Once he identifies himself and commands them not to fear, the boat arrives at the shore. The test is over.
- Jesus has shown himself firmly in command of the forces of nature: wind and water.
- Jesus has revealed to this smaller group his identification with the powerful unseen God of the Old Testament. He is I Am. "It is I."

Question is: how is everyone's faith? Where are they at? The discourse of the following morning will offer the answer.

The Bread of Life Discourse:

This is the one instance in this series where we are going to spend some time with the dialogue after the signs in order to complete our unpacking of it.

- The Bread of Life discourse takes place in Capernaum:
- It offers a further revealing of Jesus' identity as an implication of the signs as well as a revealing of the lack of faith of those around him.

John 6:22-68: the Bread of Life Discourse.

- The crowds go chasing him down, going across a section of the Sea, to intercept him in Capernaum at the Synagogue there.
- He calls them out on their insufficient faith. "You just want a wonder worker."

Better than the Nourishment of the Law and the Wonders that they are used to:

- He invites them to believe in the One that God has sent, and that he offers something greater than the sustenance of the Law and of Mosaic customs.
- And they respond by asking him to prove himself, forgetting completely the sign of the previous day. What can be greater than the Mosaic law?
- They respond by thinking they must DO something to please God. Works of the Law. They do not grasp that what he is offering is a GIFT and that it far surpasses the power of the Law to transform.
- Jesus: I am the Bread of Life
- Identifies himself with the Mana, with Moses, and the unseen God who provides and feeds.
- Jesus explains that one must eat his flesh and drink his blood in order to have life.
- This is his “hour” when he will spill his blood and offer his flesh on the cross. His death and resurrection will be sustenance and nourishment.
- How does one encounter this? In the Eucharist: real eating and drinking as a ritual.
- Here there are clear ties to the Eucharist and its integral place in the life of the Christian.
- The Jews begin to argue about what this can mean.
- Jesus does not attempt to soften what has been said, but instead repeats and reinforces the point.

The final result:

- The crowds and disciples question, doubt, and they turn away.
- This man is making himself greater than the Law as a nourisher, and his required means of receiving it (eating him) are unacceptable.
- the Twelve stay, but even then it is with an incomplete understanding.
- Peter does offer a correct response: Jesus is “of God.” His true origins are not about Bethlehem, or Nazareth, or anything earthly: he is of God.
- Jesus responds that even this sufficient act of faith is not above the possibility of failure, referencing that one of them (Judas) will fail.

Who is Jesus from both of these signs and the discourse?

- New Exodus, new liberator from slavery to sin.
- The new Passover: Christians saw Jesus, multiplication of the loaves, and the last supper all as one theme of him replacing the Jewish rituals they were now excluded from.
- New giver of sustenance and life: replaces the Mana
- God of abundance- the leftovers.
- The God of the wind and the waves who has power over all creation.
- The Bread of Life and the provider of indestructible life.

End of Session Nine