

Sermon for Sunday, July 26, 2009

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

By Tim Ljunggren

First Lesson	2 Samuel 11:1-15
Psalm	14
Second Lesson	Ephesians 3:14-21
Gospel	John 6:1-21

The crowd that gathered that day by the sea was hungry. They were hungry for food. The day had been long as they followed and listened to Jesus as he spoke and taught. They were hungry for leadership. The wait for a king—a messiah—had been long and wearing, passing from one generation to another. So when Jesus fed them, 5000 of them, plus women and children, from so little (five barley loaves and a couple of fish), they thought that they had finally found their king. They thought that they had a new ruler who would take care of all their physical needs and wants. They thought that they had found the long-promised one who would make everything okay again; no more hunger, no more sickness, no more oppression.

Our Holy Scripture tells us that, in their excitement, the people were about to come and take Jesus by force to make him king. The experience of sharing a bountiful meal was quickly put behind them as they rushed to take care of their own desires and agendas. The crowd did not see that they were hungry for more than food and political leadership. The crowd did not see that they had been fed and filled by more than bread and fish.

We are a hungry people as well, those of us gathered here this morning. In all likelihood, our stomachs are full, too full! We remember, pray for, and act to alleviate the hunger of others. Our hunger, though, goes beyond food, like those who gathered by the Sea of Galilee over two thousand years ago.

We hunger for forgiveness.

We hunger for reconciliation and restoration in relationships.

We hunger for joy and peace in place of bitterness and cynicism.

We hunger for peace over the choices we have made.

We hunger for a sense of God's love in our hearts.

We hunger for unity, to be the one body, in the one Spirit.

We hunger for God.

For what is hunger but an emptiness—and unfilled void—that lurks deep within us? What is hunger but a reminder of our dependency upon the gifts of the Creator and the gifts of others?

Sometimes we try and fill our hunger with those things that draw us away from God and each other. Often, we get caught up in our own desires and agendas, trying to break others and bend them to our wills. We rush from the meal to take care of our own business. We don't stop to acknowledge our hunger. We go on with business as usual.

We forget that we have been fed.

As we leave this gathering this morning, may the phrase repeated on all of our lips be—"thank you." For, like the Israelites in ancient days, we beheld God, and ate and drank.

Amen. ...