

“I’ll Have What She’s Having”

John 6:24-35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’ ²⁶Jesus answered them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.’ ²⁸Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ ²⁹Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’ ³⁰So they said to him, ‘What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?’ ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”’ ³²Then Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ ³⁴They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’

My family has been re-watching a lot of my favorite movies this summer. We’ve watched the entire Planet of the Apes series from 2011, which many of you know is a remake of the film featuring Charlton Heston that was originally released in 1968 and spawned several sequels and a TV series. I remember watching the original movies and TV shows with my grandparents in North Carolina when I was a kid. My grandmother was a huge fan of science fiction. We’ve also watched the entire Jurassic Park and Jurassic World series, and I’ve been reading the Michael Crichton book that inspired the original movie, so I’m deep into dinosaurs right now. I’m a sucker for summer blockbusters. Many of you remember the movie, *When Harry Met Sally*, with Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal. That doesn’t really fit the action-packed style of typical summer blockbusters, but some of you remember that it was a huge hit. The most memorable scene from that movie happened at Katz’s deli in Manhattan, which is a real deli that you can visit. I won’t give away any spoilers

because if you've seen the movie, then you know exactly what I'm describing. The most memorable line from that scene doesn't even come from either of the movie stars, but from a 75-year-old woman who perfectly captured what we were all feeling in a moment of sheer comedic genius. On the count of three, let's all say the line together if you know it: 1-2-3- "I'll have what she's having!"

Our gospel passage this morning comes on the heels of two blockbuster moments in Jesus' ministry—the feeding of five thousand people from a few loaves and fish and the time when he walked on water. Actually, we enter the story in a very strange place. Without that context, it's hard to understand what the people want from Jesus and what he's trying to help them understand. Add to that the fact that this passage ends just before one of the most famous lines from all of the gospels when Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Maybe it's helpful to think of this scene like a movie flashback that gives us important context from the past to help us understand what's happening in the present. The people compare Jesus to Moses, one of the heroes of the Jewish faith—the one who led the people out of Egyptian bondage, gave them the Ten Commandments, and led them through the desert following God to the promised land. Moses is the one who promised that God would feed the Israelites as they journeyed through the desert, and God doordashed them Manna from heaven every morning that sustained them. So, when Jesus feeds the crowd miraculously, the people naturally compare him to Moses who did that first. Some people would lean into that kind of comparison. If Jesus were on Instagram or TikTok, then he'd immediately be thinking about producing more content. But, Jesus has a tendency to disappear throughout the gospels. God seems to show up just long enough to offer enough bread for today. It's actually kind of annoying.

The people ask Jesus, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Because if they can do it, then they'll be okay when Jesus leaves. But, Jesus tells them that what they really need to do is learn to trust God. This is actually a very challenging response. These are people from the crowd that Jesus fed the day before. They're comparing him to Moses. We can assume that these are not wealthy elites who

have secured partnerships with the Roman regime. These are more likely trades people who know what it means to go a few days without eating and live under the constant threat of Roman violence. They're the kind of people we might think it would be *right and good* for Jesus to give the power to feed themselves.

The people have seen what Jesus can do and they understand how it helps them, so they want more of it. Isn't that what we think it means to believe? I don't want to tell you that I think that's the wrong way to believe. It's a great place to begin. That's how we teach our children to believe in Santa. As adults, that's the kind of relationship you might have with a wealth advisor. There's trust as long as the goods are delivered, but the trust is transactional and deeply rooted in a sense that we won't have enough, so we need to get more. In response to this, Jesus says, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." Imagine next Christmas if the kids and grandkids woke up first thing and ran to the Christmas tree excited for gifts and instead found hand-written notes that said, "Thank you for believing in me."

As faithful people, we walk a tightrope in our relationship between belief and the material world. The grace of God is revealed in the fundamentals of life. Every breath of fresh air is the grace of God. Every drink of fresh water is the grace of God. It's a blessing to know that when we leave this beautiful sanctuary, we have homes to go back to. Everyone deserves to have their basic needs met as human beings created with dignity in the Image of God. And at the very same time, the meal that we will share this morning reveals the fact that the grace of God mingles with the grain of the earth, the sweat of the worker, the waste of the factory, the exhaust of the semi-truck, and the plastic in the oceans. In other words, the grace of God is everywhere, which means that it is important to know the difference between the bread of life and the stuff of life.

Jesus says, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life... For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." What gives life to the world? What gives you life? There's a limited amount of life in dollar bills, but some number is necessary to live in our world. Our predicament is that many of us aren't very practiced at discerning the

grace of God in the ordinary stuff of life, so we naturally seek out more and more. The problem is compounded by the fact that if we struggle to discern God's grace in our lives, but we think of ourselves as faithful people, then we naturally grow insecure in our relationship with God. We increasingly feel like we need more evidence of God's faithfulness, and if we struggle to see God in the evidence, then we just end up with more stuff. When Jesus says, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life...", he is reminding people to develop their ability to discern what is good for us rather than cultivate an appetite for what is available.

Last week, I was on vacation with my family at a lake in South Carolina. We spent our days floating in tubes off the end of the dock, kayaking, and fishing. It was great. Every few minutes, turtle heads would appear just above the surface of the water about 15 feet off the end of our dock. All week long, we were visited by turtles, sometimes 2-3 at a time. My two-year-old nephew was probably most excited about the turtles, but he never seemed to be looking in the right direction when they appeared. We'd see a turtle head bob above the waterline, and then say, "Seeley, do you see the turtle?" He'd look all around, trying to spot the small head on the vast surface, but often the turtle was gone before he spotted it. In both excitement and frustration, Seeley would shout, "TURTLE! TURTLE!" And you'll be surprised to know that did not help summon more turtles.

We can be that way with God's grace. Unsure if we have enough for a good life, for forgiveness of those times when we have caused others to suffer, unsure if we have enough to return to God's love in eternity. Jesus reminds us how little it takes for him to feed multitudes. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." What a miracle it would be to come to the table this morning, one of the places where Jesus told us to find him, and to trust that there is enough grace available to us all. The work of faith is developing our ability to leave the table, where grace is so clear, and to recognize the bread of life everywhere else.

There's a lot to remember about that famous scene at Kat's Deli in *When Harry Met Sally*. This probably isn't the best time to describe it in detail, and I don't want to

give away any spoilers, but suffice it to say that what makes the scene so memorable is Sally's ability to fool Harry. The woman at the other table overhears how much Sally seems to be enjoying her lunch, and she famously says, "I'll have what she's having." But, Sally was faking. The other woman expects to receive an experience as full and satisfying as Sally, but all she gets is a sandwich. Not only that, Sally is so famously particular about the ingredients of her sandwich that it's hard to imagine how she could experience any grace in it at all. For Sally, the sandwich is a thing she can control—faking satisfaction when she needs to. That works against faithful people so often—the deep feeling that it may be foolish to surrender some of our control and trust the *enoughness* of God's grace. It may be foolish to not take enough bread for this week rather than just this day. It may be foolish to give some of my bread to people who don't seem to deserve it like I do. The bread at this table is free and open to all. You don't have to fake anything to receive it—not even belief. Coming to the table may help us start to see God's grace in surprising places throughout our lives. It may even be that if we really take this meal into our hearts and let it change us, somebody else may notice and think, "I'll have what she's having." Amen.