

St. Paul: On The Same page

for 08.03.14 Pentecost 8a

Day One: Isaiah 55:1-5

"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant

An icy cold drink after a hot game... that's satisfying. A hearty meal after a long day's work... that's satisfying. A nice nap on a lazy summer afternoon... that's satisfying. And yet, in a matter of just hours, you will need to drink again, eat again, sleep again.

"I can't get no satisfaction" is an old song, but we continue to echo that refrain. And we search for satisfaction in an endless list of things. Advertisers spend a lot of money to take photos of food that will make your

mouth water. They'll even apply paint and make-up to the food in the attempt to make it appear more delicious. But no meal will ever truly satisfy.

What will satisfy you for life – and even longer than life? God invited the Israelites to come and receive what would truly satisfy – his everlasting covenant. His promise. That same promise is for you.

Over the years, you have invested yourself in many things. In education, in a career, in friendships, in a marriage, in property. But not one of these things will last more than a few years. What one relationship have you begun that will most surely never end? It is your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Every prayer, every verse of his word that you read, every moment you spend with him builds upon the gift, the promise, that he has given - that he will be your soul's satisfaction, your comfort, your refuge forever.

Prayer: *Father, I keep searching for good things. Guide my restless heart to find its rest in you. Amen.*

Day Two: Romans 9:1-5

I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Have you ever watched someone who was sick or in pain, and wished that you could help them? It's a terrible feeling. If you really love someone a lot, you might even wish you could trade places, so that you could take the pain on yourself instead. But that's silly, isn't it? Because even if you could, then they would only want to trade places back if they loved you too!

We feel the physical pain of others, but are we anguished for their spiritual loss? Generally, those who do not know Jesus Christ are not upset about not knowing him. They don't recognize the source of their spiritual hunger. They don't see what they are missing. In fact, they may seem quite content with their life as it is – and at the same time they may sense something is missing.

Their spiritual emptiness may feel like only a dull ache to them. Is that all it is to you? Or do you, because you know what they are missing, feel a sharper pain for those who may be eternally lost?

The billion plus people who are trusting in the words of Mohammed – the millions who are still following Buddha – the millions who are still waiting for a Messiah but rejecting Jesus – and the many right around us who believe they have no need of God at all – do you grieve with your heavenly Father because his children are far from him?

Paul loved his family, the Jewish people, and wished that they could believe in Jesus and have life, even if it meant losing salvation himself. They were so close, having received all God's promises of the Savior. But Paul knew they did not need him to die in their place. Someone had already done that – God's Son, their Savior.

Prayer: *Dearest Jesus, there is one I love who does not know you. I cannot be the Savior, but you have already given the sacrifice. Send your Spirit to _____ and give life eternal. Amen.*

Day Three: Matt 14:13-21

Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.

In our Old Testament lesson, the Israelites longed to be satisfied, but they chased after the wrong things. Earthly things. Temporary things.

Seven hundred years later, the people follow Jesus because they long to know God better – but also because they want to see miracles, want to be healed, and now they want to be fed. When Jesus fed them, “they all ate and were satisfied.”

But Jesus was not satisfied. Jesus longed to give them a better meal. He fed crowds like this at least twice, but still he knew they would continue to hunger until they had the food they really needed. A few days later (John 6), he urged them to receive the “true bread from heaven” which was his own body.

He told them, “Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life.”

But Jesus’ disciples often failed to see what was most important. “Why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread. Do you still not understand?” (Matthew 16:8)

Is that us? What do we want from Jesus? Our Lord has given us one gift after another all our life long. But we still fret at not having the things we want.

Jesus wants to give you something much greater. He desires to give you himself. For you to be satisfied at last, he wishes to be one with you.

What should you long for today? For what do you hunger? Jesus has a meal that will satisfy, not only for a day, but for eternity.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, I have hungered and thirsted for many things, but my spirit has not been satisfied. I have tried to be filled with things or friends or family, but none of them have been enough. Lord, give me a thirst for your word, a hunger for your presence, a love for the Bread of Life. Amen.*

Day Four: Matt 9:35-38

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

As our plans currently stand when this devotion is being written, next Sunday will be Pastor Wentzel’s last Sunday to share the word of God with us. We are all dismayed to see our brother in Christ depart. But it is good for us to remember a few important truths.

First, we are not merely members of St. Paul Lutheran Church. We are members of Jesus’ Church throughout all the world. So we’re sharing our faithful shepherd with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Second, the Lord of the Harvest brought Pastor Wentzel to serve among us 12 years ago. And he blessed our ministry together. The same

Good Shepherd who cared for us then still has plans for us.

Third, although it is true that “the laborers are few,” we are not the sheep that Jesus was speaking of in these verses. Those sheep who are truly “harassed and helpless” are those who still do not know the Good Shepherd. They are wandering, hungry, and do not know the way home.

We are the laborers whom Jesus would send. Not just our pastors, but all of us are called to reach out to those in danger from the wolves around them.

Finally, Jesus calls us to pray. As a congregation, we certainly want to pray that God will lead us in calling another faithful pastor to serve beside us. But we also must pray that he will send us his Holy Spirit, so that our congregation, all of us, may faithfully labor with him and joyfully carry home the harvest.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, Lord of the Church, thank you for the great gift you gave to us in Pastor Wentzel and his family. Now, Lord, continue to lead us to serve, to teach, to give, to love, to proclaim the great news of your grace. Amen.*