

***“Ambassadors, Compelled by the Love of Christ”  
Talking Points Delivered by A J Johnson 07-07-  
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Joshua 5:9-12, Psalm 32; 2 Cor 5:16-21; John 6:25-  
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*May the meditation of my heart and the words of my mouth be pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight...*

In our scripture readings this morning, the Bible has provided us with many comforting words, in which God reaches out to us and reveals Himself through the descriptive languages of scripture.

From Psalm 92, we are reminded that God is the one to whom we can confess.

He is forgiving. Our hiding place, the source of all righteousness.

In Joshua, we are reminded that God is our ultimate provider.

From Him, even the very bread that we eat comes from Him.

He was the giver of the manna from heaven, and the God of Mercy and Grace who had spared the Israelites during that first Passover.

And then in 2 Corinthians we are reminded that just as the Hebrews were recipients of God's grace and mercy, we too have access to those gifts as well.

As recipients of God's grace, we are called to share the good news of God's reconciliation.

God through Christ is the God of reconciliation, who no longer counts people's sins against them but makes us reconciled to Himself in Jesus Christ.

It is our scripture that breathes life into the word 'reconciliation'.

Christ's death and resurrection represent God's victory over all the powers that stand between humanity and

God; that keep us from a living, life giving relationship with God, both in this lifetime and in the life to come.

God is reconciling the world to himself.

Building a bridge with the cross of Christ.

God is making a new relationship with us and Him through Christ.

Through Christ, God has defeated the reign of sin, and its power to enslave humanity.

This is indeed Good News!

And it is here that Paul tells us that we now have a new title of distinction.

Now that we are made new in Christ, we get a new 'job' and that is, as Paul says in vs. 20 "We are ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."

Be reconciled, or made right in God, Paul begs us, that we might become the righteousness of God.

God thought enough of us, that He sent the one who had no sin, to die for the ones who were sinful.

God loved us enough, that He made for us a way back to Himself.

As a recipient of God's acts of reconciliation, Paul is committed, and is asking us to be committed to being an ambassador, or a representative of Jesus Christ himself. (5:20).

And as an Ambassador of our King, it is so important that we know as much about the one who we represent.

Bible study, meditation on the scriptures, worship, is important because we have a job to do.

We must represent Jesus to others, and we certainly can't speak of someone that we don't really know.

We have to know Jesus.

It is here that our Bible reading this morning brings us to the Gospel of John, where we find Jesus declaring himself to be “The Bread of Life”.

And when our scripture opens on John this morning we find the gathered few, who had been looking Jesus and find him at tranquil setting, seated by the side of the lake.

Jesus speaks to them and reveals that they were looking for him not because of signs and wonders they had seen him doing earlier, but because they had eaten the loaves of bread Jesus had provided and had received their fill.

That tells us something about Jesus.

Jesus, the one we now represent, knows our hearts intent.

He knows when we desire food to fill and nourish us, but He knows what we really need is nourishment for our souls.

He says in John 6:26 “do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”

John’s gospel, more than any other, I find speaks in such a way as to point to the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ teaching are most often followed by teaching.

They have received the miraculous feeding of the multitude, and Jesus uses this as a symbol for him being the provision of life for His followers.

And it is so beautifully done. We have all experienced times when our bodies have let us know we are hungry.

It is a physical event that is common to every human being. Jesus tells us that just as our bodies desire food our souls long for Him.

It harkens to Job 23:12 “I have treasured the words of his [God’s] mouth more than my daily bread.”

Another version says “I treasure/desire God’s word more than my necessary food”

That’s how an Ambassador of Christ that Paul is challenging us to be must seek after Jesus.

He is literally the Bread of Life that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

In its first century context, the symbol of bread is an invitation for Jesus’ fellow Jews to re-think the history on which their understanding of God was based.

They understood God to be the God that provided manna from heaven when they were wandering in the wilderness.

They understood that after consuming food, a few hours later your body will hunger again.

Jesus reminds them that those that ate the manna in the wilderness, died, but those that eat the bread of life that

Christ offers shall live eternally with Him in the paradise of heaven.

This is an invitation for his followers to rethink the nature of their own relationship to God, and of Jesus' place in that relationship.

Today, in our modern reading it also provides a backdrop of understanding the central remembrance of Jesus and the celebration of his continuing, living presence, as experienced in the Lord's Supper.

Jesus was heavenly minded, but he was focused on us.

And at this moment in the gospel of John, Jesus knew that the cross lay before him, but his disciples did not.

He had to prepare them for a time when they would be separated from his earthly body and become Ambassadors for him upon the earth.

Jesus is preparing them well in advance for the communion meal that we will share this morning.

He is the manna sent down from heaven.

He is the bread that when consumed will live forever.

His body is the flesh that was given for the world and for each of us in a total expression of devotion and love for each and every one of us.

As his representatives, it's important that we pause and reflect upon what it took to bring the body and the blood to the table.

This invitation to come to a table is steeped in God's love for us.

It is an invitation that is bound by a love we couldn't even begin to fully understand.

The scriptures don't tell us how often to meet at the table, but it does tell us how. In remembrance of Jesus.

Approach the table understanding that our presence is made available as a gift of God.

Understanding that the invitation to each and every one of us was paid with great cost by our host.

Jesus asks us to come for a moment partake not as enemies of God, but as family, as friends, as recipients of His love, and as those who understand that their true desire is not just for food for the body, but food for their souls.

Christ invites us to come and partake as students who are constantly studying as Ambassadors who long to bring Him to a hurting world.

The most important work of preparing the table for this meal today has been done.

Jesus has already given the bread and the cup, which was his alone to give.

The second step is ours. That is to accept Christ's invitation to salvation.

Once we have accepted Christ's loving offer of salvation the rest is part of package deal.

Accept salvation, get peace, joy, love, heaven, eternal life, and all the other words that we read in the scriptures today that describe our God of love, righteousness, mercy and forgiveness.

And like any good Ambassador, after dining with the King, go and tell everyone how good the meal was.

Tell how wonderful it is to pray and to be in God's presence and to come to the table.

AMEN.

Let's pray.