“Thanksgiving in a land of Plenty”

**John 6: 25-35**

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

26 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

28 Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

29 Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

30 So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’

32 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34 “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

The story is told of two old friends who ran into each other on the street one day. One of them looked forlorn, almost on the verge of tears. His friend asked, “What has the world done to you, my old friend?” The sad fellow responded, “Let me tell you. Three weeks ago, an uncle died and
left me forty thousand dollars.” “That’s a lot of money.” “But two
weeks ago, my cousin I never even knew died, and he left me eighty five
dozen dollars free and clear.” “Sounds like you have been
blessed…..” “You don’t understand!” he interrupted. “Last week my
great-aunt died and I inherited almost a quarter of a million dollars.”
Now the friend was really confused. “Then, why do you look so glum?”
“Because this week, I got nothing!”

That’s the problem with receiving something on a regular basis for
nothing. Even if it’s a gift, we eventually come to expect it. This is the
“entitlement mindset” that has permeated American culture at almost
every level from needful adult children to recipients of government
programs. We have been blessed to live in a land of plenty and as a
result we become complacent and many times we are completely
unwilling to give thanks to anyone for anything.

In the reading I just read from John many of those following Jesus had a
entitlement mindset. Its human nature! They wanted to be fed, for free!
They asked Jesus for a perceived need which Jesus was happy to give,
he fed 5,000 people. But when Jesus reminded them that he did not
come into the world to meet just there perceived needs but for their real
need of spiritual food the crowds started the thin out. Jesus makes the
connection with “manna in the wilderness”, how God met their
perceived needs needs but when Jesus offers them real bread, life giving
bread, when Jesus says he is “the bread of life” And that by believing in
him they would never hungry, listen to what the crowd says. At this the
Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread
that came down from heaven.” 42 They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of
Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I
came down from heaven’?”(ILLUS- Maslow Hierarchy of needs)

There were days when Jesus and his disciples had neither food nor
shelter, what can be worse than that? How about eternal separation from
God in the fires of hell? Yeah life can get worse.
Jesus comes into the world to meet not just our perceived needs but he meets our sin need, the need for our reconciliation with God. Jesus is the “the bread of life!” when it’s all said and done Jesus is really our only need! He is the only way to reconciliation with God.

And yet we spend most of our time pursuing dirt piles, cars, houses, trophies, the latest gadgets, the stuff that last only a few years and then is thrown out, along with all the other piles of dirt the world offers. I have a big pile of dirt myself over there on Sunrise Mountain at 1896 Claudine DR.

And as we go about collecting our dirt piles, and organizing them, making them neat, we neglect God. We forget to give thanks to the giver of all good gifts, especially for the gift of faith. Faith leading to salvation is the greatest gift one can have and it is the only thing that won’t end up in the dirt pile. Why did God give me faith, I don’t know! It is simply sheer grace and the reason Jesus died and rose is because the offer of grace, the giving of faith is available to all people!

We all are like that thinning crowd of followers of Jesus. We want Jesus to do this or that for us, there is always one more thing we want when in reality we deserve nothing. We want Jesus to give us one more thing, one more demonstration of power so our lives are better. It’s almost as if Jesus is some kind of cosmic magician who owes us something. Sort of like the song, raindrops keep falling on my head, so I did some talking to the sun, that I didn’t like the way he got things done, sleeping on the job.”

Maybe the real problem we all share is we lose sight of the gifts that God has blessed us with. Maybe for some of us the pains of life have been so overwhelming, or the anger is so deep, that we no longer see how blessed we are. Or maybe you have been blessed so much, with so much stuff, maybe your dirt pile is so big that even those blessings don’t look like much anymore.
As we look around us at the land of plenty that we live in, it is my prayer that we will see through new eyes each day at the ways God is always blessing us, and that we will never take his blessings for granted. This year as we celebrate Thanksgiving, may we see God for who he really is and see ourselves as whom we really are: people who are blessed beyond measure and people who need to give thanks everyday to the giver of all. We have been given the bread of life! Our sins are forgiven, guilt has been eliminated. The bread that Jesus offers us is the only bread that will last into eternity, and he will feed our hunger for meaning in life. Truly it is God first, who is deserves our Thanksgiving.