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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Sunday closest to August 3 |
| Proper 13 Year B RCL |

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| ***Track 1*** |  |  |
| 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a Psalm 51:1-13 Ephesians 4:1-16 John 6:24-35 |  |  |

**The Collect**

Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a**

When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.” Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master’s house, and your master’s wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against theLord.”

**The Response**

**Psalm 51:1-13**

***Miserere mei, Deus***

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; \*  
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness \*  
and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, \*  
and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against you only have I sinned \*  
and done what is evil in your sight.

5 And so you are justified when you speak \*  
and upright in your judgment.

6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, \*  
a sinner from my mother's womb.

7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, \*  
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; \*  
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, \*  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

10 Hide your face from my sins \*  
and blot out all my iniquities.

11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, \*  
and renew a right spirit within me.

12 Cast me not away from your presence \*  
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

13 Give me the joy of your saving help again \*  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

**The Epistle**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said,

"When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;  
he gave gifts to his people."

(When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

**The Gospel**

**John 6:24-35**

The next day, when the people who remained after the feeding of the five thousand saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus 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. Do 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.” Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So 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? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then 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. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Grant us always to seek the truth, come whence it may, cost what it will.

Within the cycle of readings, the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are divided each to a year, and we get readings of the Gospel of John in spaces in between. Thus, we are currently in a little side reading from the Gospel of John. It helps to know this, because we aren’t sitting down and reading through the Gospel of John in one sitting. If we were, then it would be an even more curious question that begins this week’s Gospel.

Last week, we had John’s version of the feeding of the 5000 followed by Jesus walking on the water. This week, the people who were fed, wake up on the grass of the hillside and seem to go, “wait, we got free food, let’s go see the man who gave us the picnic.” And they catch up with Jesus in Capernaum and their first question is, “When did you get here?”

Indeed Jesus, “when did you get here?” And you can see why I stress that it’s important that we aren’t reading the Gospel according to John sequentially, because the first opening lines of the Gospel of John tells us when Jesus got here… “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”

And although he doesn’t answer the direct question, Jesus continues, for this is the passage to explain the feeding of the 5000. John always uses the words “signs” instead of “miracles,” but regardless as to how they are referred, in no other Gospel is Jesus more devoted to the attempt to explain who he is. “I am” … echoing the words when God encounters Moses through the burning bush, is used a lot. “I am the bread of life.” What Jesus gives consistently is fulfillment of life, but not always the filling of tummies. Jesus helps the believers and the “almost believers” then and now recognize that it was not Moses who did anything. It IS always WAS and SHALL BE God. Both the subject and the verb tense matters. It was not Moses who was providing. The miracles of Moses did not belong to Moses, all belong to God. It’s a frameshift, but it’s an important frameshift.

And we often like to think that we are so much better than those disciples or followers of yesteryear. Here I stand in front of you, attempting to explain the Gospel, and particularly this part of fulfillment and soul food and Eucharist, there is the giving over of self to God, and that is nothing that qualifies as explainable. Whole books have been written, and still it is better left as a mystery, how eating the soul food of Eucharist changes us profoundly. The part that I can only hope to illuminate with the help of God, is how some of this translates to present day.

What does this mean for us today? how does this translate to us today? Too often we today are no different than the people in John’s Gospel. We, like those before us, are hung up on physical manifestations to satisfy our own experience. The same God now gives you bread, the same God now in Jesus Christ died for you. Still our desires for our own physical manifestations take hold…. We continue to want to be filled, rather than God’s fulfillment. We misplace our desire. Although we say it every Sunday in the Lord’s prayer, “Thy will be done,” instead we often pretend that we know in advance what God’s will is. We want a full worship space, we want a full budget, we want a Sunday school for all ages, a youth program, a mission trip, a something, a program as a fix, we want the right kind of worship with some sort of magic kind of music, we want some sort of thing/ spark, the spirit to show up when we demand it, all the things we want…

Now, none of the above are bad things at all, but some are direct outcomes of God having shown up before. But let us not confuse the outcomes we desire, with the larger thing that God is doing—God’s fulfillment. If the particulars become the out comes, then we don’t focus on the source.

Why is the order so important? …..”Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’”

God’s work, the mission of God, then, is our believing. That is fulfillment from God. This work of us coming to believe is NOT us thinking into it, or ideas, or testimonies. God’s calling us into believing is bringing us to a new form of life, an incarnation, an ethic; so that we enter into a certain kind of life. We follow Jesus’ incarnation so that we too then focus on what Christ focused on. This is to come to be in Christ. This is God’s fulfillment. This is what it means – this is what it always means – to attend to the signs of God in Christ: it means not the satisfaction of a healing for itself, or a feeding for itself, or the changing of water to wine itself – but that these things call us to the deepest “miracle” of all: fullness of communion with God, “coming to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” To have this communion, to be his Body, is truly and rightly to eat of the Bread of Life.