

St. Anne's Parish

July 29, 2018 - The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel - John 6:1-21

A sermon delivered by the Rev'd. Timothy Mulder

"Trusting God, from one duck to the next."

Last year, the British government instituted an office for dealing with the rising level of anxiety in the land. If you were to make a list, what would you say you worry about? One source ranks worries this way: money and the future, job security, relationships, health. You might have a different list or ranking. Sometimes we worry about little things. An old Swedish proverb says, "Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow." But I also just finished a book about a time during the Reagan administration when our leaders were seriously worried about a nuclear war with the Soviet Union.

On the surface of things, our Gospel this morning is about feeding a multitude. But let's go deeper. The people that day were worried about a lot of things. A large crowd followed Jesus because they saw what he was doing for the sick - Health concerns.

The disciples saw the size of the crowd and Jesus could tell they were worried, "Where are we to buy bread?" That's an economic question. Do we have enough money to do what is needed, to pay our bills today, to last through our senior years?

When the busy day ended, they got in their boat, but a storm came up - the unexpected storms of life? And then they were terrified because they saw Jesus walking toward them on the water! The inexplicable, the unknown, new things happening around the world that we've never experienced before? What if we can't handle the problems? What if we make a mistake? What if something bad happens? What if we call the wrong doctor? What if our kids go a different direction in life than we think is best for them? What if, what if, what if...? We can tie ourselves in knots.

Toward the end of his ministry Jesus will look back and ask his disciples to remember the events of this day. He said something to the effect of, "You were worried. You couldn't imagine how things could work out. You didn't have faith in me."

Ah, now there's the real issue!. It's not just about health or money or food. It's about faith and trust. It is trusting that God really cares, cares and acts for us.

In our lesson today there is no indication that the crowd was starving. This wasn't famine relief. This is the heart of the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Praying for daily bread is not because we're going to starve. Praying for daily bread is asking God to cultivate in us an attitude, a perspective, an outlook for all of life of not being so anxious. It is learning to trust God through all our ordinary days.

Feeding the multitude was big, but it reminds me of the man whose favorite meal was roast duck. He complained to his wife that she only made duck twice a year on his birthday and on Christmas. "Listen," she replied. "You should be grateful for all the ordinary meals that get you from one duck to the next."

Howard Hageman's father did not go to church much, but when the family would come home from church he would ask who was in church that day. One day Howard asked his father why he always asked that question, and his dad replied, "I always wonder if God ever shows up at that church?" Do we think about that from day to day, expecting and trusting God to be with us, to show up, to act?

Frankly I am concerned in our society as it increasingly decides it doesn't need God. Might our suicide rate, our increased depression rates, our narcissism (self-centeredness), be a reflection of the lack of our God centeredness?

Rick Warren says: "The more you pray, the less you'll panic. The more you worship, the less you'll worry."

There are a lot of things to worry about in life. The issue is not how to avoid them, but how to handle them. Along the sea that day Jesus was teaching his disciples to trust God every day, trust him, pray more, worship more, and then relax more. God does care about you and about this world. And God can bring us through even the worst of storms.