

GOD'S LEFTOVERS (JN 6:1-21)

Sermon by the Rev. Corinne Hodges, Sun., July 26, 2009, SJOC

- I. Hungry Planet: What the World Eats by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Alusio—30 families in 24 countries photographed with a week's worth of groceries
 - A. Chad—Family of six, one baby, sitting on dirt floor with three sacks of food—grains and a third of container of goat's milk, scarce supply
 - B. Germany—\$, fresh vegetables, lots of beer
 - C. U.S.—three families surrounded by food, tables full of liters of soda stacked on top of each other, pizza boxes, processed foods
 - D. Lots of lessons we can take from these pictures, one being that when people have less (Chad) they have to be pretty resourceful

- II. Lesson in both OT and gospel
 - A. Elisha—man brings his very best, 20 loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain from the first fruits of season, but task is to feed 100 people
 - B. Jesus—boy has 5 barley loaves and two fish, but task is to feed 5,000
 - C. In both a little needs to go a long way and there are great doubts from people as to whether this is even possible
 - D. In fact it appears, they do not even want to try
 - E. Yet Elisha and Jesus both tell them to "Give it to the people," assuring them that not only will there be enough, but there will be some left over

- III. Friendship Luncheon here
 - A. A couple times, not enough time to make something, had to pick something up,
 - B. Watched as people came and brought their first-fruits, table became full of homemade dishes, often what I brought remained untouched
 - C. Mass on Grass and church picnic or our Annual Mtg. carry-in—banquet of food, feast for many, incl. guests
 - D. When people pool together their resources, skies the limit

- IV. Whenever read this story in gospel (in all 4 gospels), always question of how did this happen:
 - A. Did the Holy Spirit soften people's hearts, encouraging them to search their pockets and bags, contributing rather than just taking from the food that was being distributed in the baskets?
 - B. Did Jesus actually perform an amazing act, exponentially multiplying the food?
 - C. In the end, I don't think the details of how the food was increased really matters—the fact is that through Christ, a little became a whole lot, more than enough, everyone was fed and no one left hungry—that in itself, was a miracle

- V. This story has great meaning today, when so many have lost their jobs, less money and find they need to make more from less: need to be resourceful. Readings today have to do less about our own resourcefulness and more about God's
 - A. With the great task of feeding so many people before them the servant and disciples are anxious and worried, yet Elisha and Jesus tell them not to fear
 - B. In JN, Jesus asks disciples to tell the people to sit down/recline in the (lush) grass, to make themselves comfortable
 - C. This was not going to be a quick meal on the run, worthwhile
 - D. After all seated, Jesus takes his time, gives thanks to God for the food, blessing the bread and the fish, breaks it into pieces and then distributes it to the people

- E. Eucharistic meal—exactly what we do at church each week at Communion
 - F. Week after week, seasons, have an idea of how many people will be here
 - G. Easter or Christmas, try to plan for the crowds, want to have enough
 - H. Surprise--Graduate Sunday (120) we came close—breaking pieces, smaller and smaller, to make sure all received. May have had some close calls, but we have yet to run out
- VI. Another part of the message and this has to do with God's leftovers
- A. Jesus is specific here about gathering up the fragments, the scraps, so that nothing may be lost
 - B. In hard economic times, people have a new respect for leftovers
 - C. In fact, if gathered up, leftovers can provide enough for a whole other meal
 - D. Responsible, to leave nothing to waste—gather up the crumbs
- VII. The task of providing for God's people, including our own families, is huge
- A. Today there are more than 850 million people in the world who go hungry
 - B. Those kinds of numbers are scary and intimidating—may become discouraged and ask, why even try: We hear this in the servant's remark: "How can I set this meager amount of food before 100 people?" Or in Philip's comment, "200 day's wages would not buy enough food for each of them to have a little."
 - C. Yet God tells us to feed God's people
 - D. We need to begin somewhere, with what little we've got
 - E. After all, the man's first fruits in OT were not much, nor were the boy's loaves and fish, but they were are start, little bits that grew into a great offering
- VIII. Who are the hungry people you know in your family and community? There are all different kinds of hungers in this world. What are they hungry for and how can you help? God has given us all resources, either internal or external, to share. Perhaps you can take the time to sit with someone in the lush grass, dine and both be fed. God says there is plenty for all, and that God will indeed provide for those in need, even when the task seems overwhelming and hopeless. How are we going to contribute and give not only our leftovers, but also our first-fruits? Out of God's fullness, may we ensure that all God's children, regardless of the hunger, are nourished, cared for and satisfied.