

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

75th Week of Pandemic - Indoor Service

I Kings 19:4-8

Psalm 34:1-8

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

John 6:35, 41-51

08/08/2021

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

35 Jesus said to [the crowd,] “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42 They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” 43 Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Gospel of our Lord

**Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

**Anger**

Good morning! I was born on July 25, 1987. Almost 13 months to the day, on August 22, 1988, my brother was born. So for my entire life I have had a barely younger brother hanging around. When we were very little, this was usually great. We had our share of little kid arguments, but for the most part, we got along because we always had someone to play with. But as we got older, I started to get more and more annoyed that we were so close in age. I was the older brother! He should give me some space! What made matters worse was that because we were so close in age, we basically went through those life passages at the same time. I was one grade ahead of my brother, but in the grand scheme, that wasn't enough to merit very different treatment. So either I was lumped with my brother and treated like a younger kid, or Rick was lumped with me and got to do something a little earlier than the other kids. For example, we both got cellphones at the same time.

As you can imagine, this didn't sit well with me. In fact, it created a sense of resentment that just made me jealous. This got worse in high school as our circle of friends started to bleed together. "These were MY friends," I thought, "go hang out with your own friends!" Now, I'm not saying our relationship was completely taken over by these feelings, but it definitely colored things. As high school wrapped up and college began, things got worse. While we were both attending different schools, they were still local. And most importantly, we were both still working at the family

business. I was already set on going to seminary, and Rick was going for a business degree to take over Crummitt & Son. As he stepped further into a leadership role, it again, made me jealous.

And so that sets the stage for my story, on one fateful Christmas Eve morning. While we were at work, he said something that got under my skin. Words were exchanged, then harsher words were spoken, and then a little shoving ensued, and good people of St. Paul's, I'm ashamed to admit that the punches were soon flying. One or two employees looked in when they heard the yelling, saw us fighting and said to themselves, "That's above my pay grade." I can't remember how it ended, but I am pretty sure I lost.

*"26Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger..."<sup>1</sup>*

Looking back it's so stupid. All of that anger basically boiled down to my own insecurity and resentment. Clearly, I wasn't living up to the expectations set out in our second lesson from Ephesians. (I was going to preach about bread and our Gospel lesson, but late last night something brought me back to this section of the second reading.) Here is the good news though, This wasn't the first fight and argument between the two of us, and we had developed a pretty good way of getting over things quickly. Christmas Eve worship was attended by both of us, sitting side by side. But the problem got to where it was because of an inability to truly share with one another. We're all guilty of this, right? As a society we're very good at speaking AT someone, but not really listening. Instead of sharing what was going on, and maybe realizing that beneath the anger was the deeper insecurity, I argued. When we do this, it immediately puts the other person on the defensive, it's one person against another, not two people against a problem.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:26 NRSV

But, if our second reading tells us anything, it's that this has apparently been a problem for the Christian church from the very beginning. Before I went to seminary, I often only paid attention to the Gospel lesson, zoning out for the first and second reading, so here's a refresher: *"25So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. 26Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27and do not make room for the devil. 28Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. 29Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. 30And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. 5:1Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, 2and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*<sup>2</sup>

It's a much different way to live one's life than how we often go about things, isn't it? What I love about this reading is that it doesn't say that the emotions themselves are wrong, but how we respond and act on them becomes the sin. We can be angry, but don't let it push us to sin. We can be sad, but we can't let it destroy things around us. It's also interesting to note that the reading doesn't care who is right or wrong. *"Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger... be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."* The Body of Christ isn't concerned with our ego's,

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<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:25-5:2 NRSV

so let it go and move on. Live like Jesus Christ, who had all the right in the world to lash out at people who failed time and time again, and yet chose to be loving, forgiving us all of our sins.

And the text isn't calling on us to just bite our tongues and harbor the feelings behind each other's backs. We're not called to "be the bigger person." Because the assumption there is that we were still right. No, the writer of Ephesians is calling on us to realize that as the Body of Christ we can't lie to one another and continue to remain healthy. If I hurt my foot, I can pretend that it isn't as bad as it truly is, but that doesn't change the fact that my body will suffer for it, that other parts of me will be forced to make up for the deficiency. Have you ever seen someone with an injury on one leg who after a while ends up creating an opposite problem in the good leg? The members of the Body of Christ are just the same. What hurts one of us hurts us all.

So we choose a different path. We "live in love" as the text reads. In the ancient world it was believed that when someone made a sacrifice to God, that as it was burned the smell and smoke would rise up and be pleasing to God. Likewise, our text calls on us to turn our whole lives, our very being into something that pleases God. Will it be easy? God no! But nothing truly good ever comes without effort. Along the way I'm sure we'll drop the ball time and time again, but thankfully, we'll be surrounded by siblings in Christ who can model the right thing when we can't manage, and just maybe we'll be able to do the same for them. Wouldn't that be something to see... let's make it a reality! Amen.