

Lectionary B Pentecost 10 August 2, 2015
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, IN
Roberta Meyer

Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15
Psalm 78:23-29
Ephesians 4:1-16
John 6:24-35

Thrown a Curve

I have been praying to God for the last two weeks about something specific. I have been weeping and pleading with God about this one thing. And you know what, my answers are being answered—and I am not that all-fired happy about it. In fact, I'm not happy at all. I see that my prayer request is being granted exactly the way I asked it. The desire of my heart is being satisfied, but come on, God, it is not being answered the way I had it planned in my mind.

So I'm not much different than those Israelites out in the wilderness with Moses, or for that matter, then those multitudes that followed Jesus to the other side of the sea. The Israelites were hungry. And they were mad. Here Moses brought them out to the wilderness where there was nothing to eat. Did he bring them out there to die, to starve to death? Aaron brought them the message, *"Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining."*

There is this children's book. It is called, *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. They even made a movie about it. Food falling from the sky. When I read this story about the Israelites being fed in the wilderness I imagine the sound of the quail falling from the sky, "Plop! Splat! Thud!" And the quail was familiar enough to them that they knew what to do. But what about that white flaky stuff the next morning? What were they supposed to do with Frosted Flakes from the sky? They exclaimed, 'Manna!' The word "manna" means something like, "What in tarnation is that?"

They wanted food. God gave them food. But not the way they expected. It wasn't the kind of food they had in mind. Then we come to the crowd that followed Jesus, centuries later. They were hungry. Jesus had just fed them all they could eat the day before. And he did this with just two fish and five little buns. So they followed him to the other side of the sea.

There was confusion. First of all they could figure out how Jesus got over there. Jesus wasn't making sense to them. And they asked him how in the world he passed them without them noticing. Jesus, switched things on them. "You're just looking for me because your tummies are rumbling again. You need to stop thinking of your stomachs and start working for food for your souls, because it brings eternal life."

Ok, what were they supposed to say to that? They took the bait. *"What must we do to perform the works of God?"* Jesus' answer was not what they expected. It was too simple and way too hard for them. *"This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

Ok, so if that is the answer, they need a sign. "Show us by giving us that Manna, like Moses did for our ancestors." This amazes me. Because, what did they think he did the day before? Did they already forget about that little kid's lunch?

“That’s another thing you guys need to get straight.” Jesus told them in no uncertain terms. Moses didn’t give them anything. God answered their prayers, or the bible says, “their complaints.” That “What is the world is it stuff” came from God. And by the way, God has something a whole lot better than heavenly Frosted Flakes for you. , ‘...it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.” Then he really threw them a curve. “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” Whoa. I’m sure that is not the answer they had in mind. But we will deal more with their reaction next week.

The point is, we ask God for what we think we need. God gives us what we need and sometimes those two don’t jive in our minds. God throws us for a curve.

“...believe in him whom he has sent.” “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” This was simple and to the point, but could they get their minds around it?

Remember, they wanted Jesus to be their Savior, in fact, they tried to force him to sit on a throne and be their “King”. The thing was their idea of the kind of king Jesus is and what God had planned were two different things. They were thrown a curve. Just like I was this week.

See, my son-in-law, Emily’s husband has been trying hard to get a job as a teacher. That is the desire of his heart and because he is my daughter’s husband, that is the desire of my heart, too. Two weeks ago he had a job interview. The perfect job for him, right there at Southridge, the school where he grew up. I prayed hard. “Please God, give him a break. Open this door for him. He has put in his time as a substitute teacher for them. He coaches for them. He works so hard. Please, God, he wants to be a teacher. Grant him this.”

Yeap, that was my prayer. Then he didn’t get the job. “God, why! Please give him a break.”

There is another factor, too. We had just found out that Emily is pregnant. A new baby is in the picture. “Come on, God, please. Help them!”

Within days my prayer was answered. Anthony has a teaching job and will be able to coach. He gets to teach 6th grade math, his dream job. Why am I not happy? His job is in Muncie, Indiana. Not what I had planned.

They were supposed to stay here, especially, now with the new baby on the way. I know many grandparents have their grandbabies much farther than Muncie Indiana. It is just that I wasn’t prepared for this kind of answer to my prayer. God threw me a curve. I’m not happy. But I’ll get over it. I do see that God gave Anthony and Emily what they needed, not what they thought they needed, or what I thought they needed.

God gave the Israelites what they needed, not what they thought they needed. They were fed. God gave Jesus’ followers what they needed, not what they thought they needed. Jesus is no king on a throne who issues orders, Jesus is the King of Kings who loved us so much he went to the cross to save us from death. We were given the Bread of Life. Believe in this bread and live forever.

Throughout August, as we come to the Lord's Supper, we are going to be surprised. Each week, the bread is going to be different, a different taste, a different color, a different texture. Sometimes Jesus feeds us in unexpected ways. Sometimes it is sweet, like manna from heaven, and sometimes we don't like the taste at first. It throws us a curve. But we can always count on God to give us what we need to thrive.

This new curve God has given my family will change things a whole lot. Anthony and Emily are now figuring all that out. They are looking forward to a new life in a new community. Neither of them have ever live away from the Huntingburg area. And that new little bundle of joy coming! It is going to be an adventure. What a surprise.

That's it. Life is full of surprises. But there is one thing we can count on. Let's hold onto Jesus' promise. *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

I believe this. So, now I'm on a new adventure. I guess I'll get an iPad so I can use Face Time to check in on that new baby in Muncie. Amen.