



The Reverend Dr. Philip C. Linder

August 12, 2012

## ***Pentecost 11***

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Dr. Stephen Covey wrote in his book, Principle Centered Leadership: *People with a scarcity mentality tend to see everything in terms of win-lose. They believe there is only so much; and if someone else has it, that means there will be less for me... People with abundance mentality employ the negotiation principle of win/win and the communication principle of seeking first to understand before seeking to be understood.*

The gospel today opens and Jesus says to the people, *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.* With these direct and beautiful words Jesus gives us the profound teaching that to know him is to be rid of hunger...to be rid of thirst...it is to be full. And it is clear that Christ is not speaking here in physical terms, but rather in spiritual and if you will soulful ones. Yet there were those around him with a scarcity mentality, a very human tendency, who complained and questioned Jesus; how could this man whose parents they knew make such a claim that he came down

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Established in 1847*

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from heaven—that he could possibly fill their hunger and quench their thirst? And Jesus answers them, *Do not complain among yourselves*. Christ is saying that he is indeed abundance and he can fill them.

So what is it to know Jesus as the one who fills us? What does it mean to know someone? You see, knowing about and actually knowing are two very different things. For example, we may know about swimming...what it is...what different strokes look like. We may watch our children compete on swim teams. And like me you may have watched lots of incredible Olympic swimming events these past two weeks. Yet knowing about swimming is different than knowing swimming. Knowing swimming is to know what it is to get wet. Knowing swimming is feeling the strokes, experiencing the waves, the pace, the breathing, and the exhaustion. Knowing swimming are the expressions we saw on the faces of Michael Phelps, Ryan Lochte, and Missy Franklin as they looked up from the pool gasping for air to see that they had just won gold.

When we say we know a person we are implying a relationship with that person. That is very different from saying that we know of a person. To know a person assumes mutual understanding, knowledge of, and face to face encounters.

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Therefore if we want to “know” Jesus Christ, we are talking about a personal relationship. And here is wherein faith comes.

One of the classic definitions of faith is the ability to believe in things unseen, but known to be true. Faith is about both a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ as well as a communal one. We personally come to know Christ through daily prayer, study of Holy Scripture, mission and ministry to those in need, contemplation, and our literal attempt to walk with Jesus through life. As one beautiful hymn sings out, *I want to walk as a child of the light, I want to know Jesus.* And we come to know Christ each time we gather as a community of faith in His Name and celebrate the great mystery of God’s love for us proclaimed in the Word and administered at this altar in the blessed bread and wine.

In the *Forward* to Stephen Purcell’s book, Even Among these Rocks: A Spiritual Journey, Eugene Peterson writes: *There is nothing in life less susceptible to stereotype than a Christian who follows Jesus on ‘the Way.’ Every Christian is an original; the Holy Spirit doesn’t go in for copying old masters; every soul is a new creation. Sins after a while all begin to look and sound alike (the devil never seems to be able to inspire anything beyond cheap reproductions). But every virtue, every*

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*act of faith, every venture into obedience is one-of-kind. The Christian life, except in the overall sense that it derives from Jesus' life and is composed on the plot of Holy Scripture, is unpredictable in its free fall through the atmosphere of grace.*

(Eugene H. Peterson, forward to Stephen D. Purcell, *Even Among These Rocks: A Spiritual Journey*, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2000)

The image of our lives as a “free fall through the atmosphere of grace,” may or may not be appealing to you. This past Friday when Ellen, our children who were visiting, and I returned from dinner we stood outside and gazed into the stars to watch the most incredible meteor shower. I had never seen one before and it was to literally see stars in a free fall. It beautifully pointed to what so many of us experience in the life of faith. And in that free fall through grace we may try many varied things to fill our hunger and quench our thirst, but it is God's Son who proclaims, *I am the bread of life...I will fill you.*

The truth of Jesus Christ has survived now for more than 2000 years—it has survived persecution, wars, social and cultural challenges, schisms, and much debate and challenges. And yet today it is still true that only the Son of God, Jesus Christ, can fill us as the *Bread of Life*. There is no gold medal, no position of

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power, no amount of money, and no other relationship that fills us like our Lord  
Jesus Christ. *Amen.* +

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