

The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
Year B Proper 12
July 26, 2009
2 Samuel 11 and John 6

In the name of the one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

If anything, King David is thorough. In the Old Testament lesson we just heard I think David commits every one of the seven deadly sins:

Sloth. Gluttony. Lust. Envy. Greed. Pride. Wrath.

Listen:

- David is lying around on his couch while his army is off fighting his enemies.
- It is late afternoon and he is only now rising from the couch. Perhaps he had overindulged just a bit the night before.
- Out on his roof, David sees his beautiful neighbor bathing. He wants only one thing.
- Despite finding out she is the wife of one of his soldiers, he sends for the woman. He will get what he wants and what he wants is the wife of his soldier.
- When the woman gets pregnant. David seeks to cover-up the truth. His reputation is at stake. He cannot be found to be the father of a child born to his soldier's wife.
- He tries to trick the soldier into coming home and sleeping with his wife so that when the baby comes, all will think it was the baby conceived while the soldier was home on a little R and R. The soldier however doesn't cooperate with David's plan - or it would be dishonorable to leave his fellow soldiers to come home for a little R and R with his wife. David's anger is kindled. He has the soldier killed.

Sloth. Gluttony. Lust. Envy and Greed. Pride. Wrath.

They are all there. In less than 500 words, we see how truly corrupt David is. How thoroughly despicable. How utterly depraved David is becoming.

And though we aren't adulterous murderers, there is something we all share in common with David.

There is an emptiness in David that nothing earthly can fill.

Despite being anointed as a child, despite being the most powerful person in his world, despite being able to marry anyone he chooses, despite having as much food and drink as he wishes, despite all of this, there is an empty void in David, eating him up from the inside out.

This is what we have in common with David: Emptiness.

We may not share in his power, status or wealth, but we share in his emptiness. We share in his humanity.

We all experience emptiness.

Emptiness is not something we can wish away. In fact, emptiness is necessary for living. For being. For existing.

Emptiness moves us forward.
Emptiness motivates us.
Emptiness creates desire.
Emptiness creates choice.

We can choose how we will fill the empty spaces, within all of us.

We can choose to fill the empty spaces with a six pack of beer.

We can choose to fill the empty spaces with a pint of ice cream.

We can choose to fill the empty spaces with a closet full of designer shoes.

We can choose to fill the empty spaces with casual sex.

We can choose to fill the empty spaces with adrenaline, with sky diving, bungee cord jumping.

We can choose to fill them with one promotion after another.

We can try to fill the empty spaces with all of these things. But we will never succeed in doing so. The emptiness will remain. If we stop here, we will never experience fullness.

We will never be able to comprehend, with all the saints,
what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
what is the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
what it means to be filled with all the fullness of God.

Scripture tells us again and again what brings fulfillment. The gospel story today makes it clear:

“Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those who were reclining;
so also the fish,
as much as they desired.
And they were filled.”

(that is how the original Greek goes)

Now I am not saying that a bite of stale pita and pickled sardine is going to fill the empty voids inside us all. If it was that easy I would be set up outside beside the farmers market!

No, our desire is for something more.

Our desire is knit into our very being.

Our desire originates in the object of our desire. Simply put, we desire God. And we are designed to do so. Emptiness is part of our humanity.

We are made to desire God, just as much as God aches in his desire for us.

So we come here today desperately hoping in our own ways to meet God. To love God and to know the love God has for us.

If we can experience it even for a moment we know it will be a gift that satisfies us at our core. It is faith that brings each of you here.

The promise of God in Christ is that we can come to that altar rail today and be satisfied. We can come to that rail with empty hands outstretched. With a longing and a desire epitomized by open hands. When you come to the altar rail today, look at your open hands. Let them guide you to recognizing the Love God has for you. Hold that love in your hand. Take that love into yourself. Let it fill you deeply.

This is a miraculous reality. God can fill the emptiness we all feel. The story from the Gospel of John is not hard to figure out, even if our rational post enlightenment selves get caught up trying to solve the mystery of the miracle. We can go that route and might unearth a plausible explanation. But we would miss the point along the way.

We all came here today to meet Jesus Christ - just as those tens of thousands of people did along the seashore in Galilee.

That mass of people met Jesus that day.

That day they all experienced the fullness of God.

And it was a miracle. Every single one of them felt the fullness of God.

It will be a miracle for you too – today when your empty hands receive your share in this Holy Communion.

And I pray, as Paul did in his letter to the Ephesians, that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Amen.