

## The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Are you being feed by Jesus Christ in your daily life? Is your church feeding you? Are you feeding your community? Is your church feeding the community? Christ's food is important to our growth from being an infant Christian to a mature Christian. If we stop eating we die, if we stop being feed by Christ food, we become stagnant, we begin to die. Growth in Christ is a never ending process. No person can ever reach the full knowledge and understanding of our faith and walk. If our church stops feeding it members with the spiritual food of Christ, it stops growing, it becomes stagnant, it starts to die. Church is all about worshiping God, growing believers in the faith and taking the faith to nonbelievers. Is your church feeding your community with the spiritual food of Jesus Christ. Are you bring people to Christ? For a church to grow we must take the gospel message to our community.

When churches and people stop being feed by Jesus Christ they become stagnant. Spiritual movement is stop. The building of lives is slowed. And these stagnant churches are filled with the same people. I am not referring to the absence of new people, although that is telling as well. I am referring to people staying the same. Unchanged. Unmoved. I am talking about people not growing in the faith, not constantly being feed so they can grow in the faith. Week after week, year after year, many people are the same. The growing process of people's lives are stalled.

Sadly, many people are stuck in the same place spiritually, they have not grown in years. There is more to being a believer than coming to church every Sunday. And in most churches, there is no intentional process to move them. The Bible paints a different picture of spiritual growth. According to Scripture a believer's life is to be growing more and more. People are not supposed to be the same. There is to be progression in the faith. Our churches should be filled with people who are becoming. Becoming more like Christ. Becoming more loving and joyful. Becoming. Being transformed. They are suppose to be feed with the spiritual food of Jesus Christ!

We become transformed through the process of metamorphosis. It means to change the essential nature of something. It is a real change, not just a change on the outside. The core of something is changed. The word is used to describe the process that a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly. The process is metamorphosis. God desires to bring His people through this morphing process. He seeks to transform the people in church into His image. And He wants to do so with ever increasing glory. Meaning He wants all of us to be more like Him tomorrow than we are today. We become transformed by spiritual food, by growing in the faith, by knowing the teaching of God.

But He also wants us to take this spiritual food out to our community. Jesus made it very clear what His churches should do, Matthew 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Notice That Jesus says that all authority belongs to Him. He is Lord. As believers and as a church, we recognize His leadership. He is in charge; we are His followers. As Christians, we exist for His glory and for His purposes. In this passage, He has given us a sacred mission: to go and make disciples. Two things come to mind when I think of this command. First many Priest and church leaders have propelled this idea that this mission is given to only those who have been trained in seminary or bible college. However, according to this command, it is the job of every believer to make disciples. The church is suppose to equip its people, every person, to be an army released on its community. Second, this command calls all of us to make disciples and not converts, and there is a big difference.

The disciple process Jesus modeled was essential to His plan to reach the world. He shows a clear example of this in today's Gospel message. Too often Christians focus rightly on the Gospel message of the Cross, but forget about the disciple process Jesus revealed and modeled. He came not only to die for us, but to give us a model for disciple making that trains Christians so they can accurately represent Him and deliver His message to the world. If Jesus had not trained his disciples who could in turn train others, the Gospel message would have been lost. No one would have heard about it after the disciples where dead.

Many Christians believe that they are unimportant to the cause of Christ and that the work of the church is the job of the clergy. So when I ask people in church why they have never served in the church, they often say, "Because I didn't think I could" Yet the bible clearly states that all believers have been given the Holy Spirit and that we are all part of the priesthood of believers. We are all saved by grace through faith for good works, which God planned for us before time began.

In today's Gospel this is exactly what Jesus is Teaching. He is about us growing in the faith and bring it to others. Let's look first at John 6: 2 "Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased." While Jesus was out doing good, He was continually with the crowds. He lived with the people and taught them where they were. He was not in church. Here is the thing, these people gave him more trouble than honor, but that was His mission to teach and bring salvation. If we are to take the spiritual food of Christ out to our neighbors and friends, we must go where they are, it is not going to be easy at all, most of the time, there are no rewards or honor shown to us. This is the example for us follow.

Then in verse 3, "And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples." He did this, so He might be more conveniently seen and heard by the multitude, this was a large crowd, ten thousand plus, following after him; this was a natural pulpit to preach salvation from. Simply put, He became a field preacher, an evangelist, taking the message to the people. The

pulpit of Christ is and never was the pulpit of a church. Jesus sit His disciples around Him. Why, to teach them and show them the way.

Discipleship is so much more than just sharing the news about Jesus, it is also about teaching people to obey the commands Jesus gave us. It is all about showing people Jesus Christ by the way we live our lives and walk our walk. This is the lesson, discipleship is critical if we want to save the church from Sunday morning show and make it a place where real relationship and real changes take place. A place where metamorphosis happens in every life.

On to the next example for us to follow, John 6:6-7: Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Look at the notice Christ took of the crowd that attended him, He lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come to him, poor, meek, ordinary people, no doubt, for such make up the multitudes, especially in such remote corners of the country; yet Christ showed himself pleased with their attendance, and concerned for their welfare, to teach us to condescend to those of low estate. The souls of the poor are precious to Christ, and should be so to us, as those of the rich. We want to go out and fill the church with people just like us, but everyone needs Jesus Christ. I hear it all the time, I don't know anyone to invite to church because all my friends go to church somewhere. How about the bank teller, or the attendant at the gas station, or the check out person at the grocery store? You see them every week, week after week, you know them and they know you. Have you asked them?

John 6:8-9 really shows us the way, the way to accept all and take what we got to spread the gospel, no matter what it's worth. The Gospel is not in the gold and glitter, but in the simple and the less. The strength is in the disciples concern to those for whom they saw his Master concerned. They were willing to bring out all they had, knowing they did not have enough, charity begins at home, my friends. Check this out, here was a little lad, probably one that followed and sold goods and the disciples had befriended for their goods. Here the provision was coarse and ordinary; they were barley loaves. Canaan was a land of wheat, the inhabitants ate the finest wheat, but barely bread was the cheapest of grains, but barley-bread is what Christ had, and better than we deserve. There were only two small fishes, not even in proportion. The message of salvation is given in whatever we have. It is not in the big and fancy, but in the small and common, everyday actions of our lives. We can show people Jesus Christ with what we have.

In John 6: 11 "And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted." It was distributed from the hand of Christ by the hands of his disciples. In distributing the bread of life to those that follow him, everyone received their full. We are given the full salvation and as disciples of Christ, we are the servants at Christ's table. Are you serving spiritual food to others?

John 6:12 says "So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." When they were filled, and every man had within him a sensible witness to the truth of the miracle, Christ said to the disciples, the servants he employed, Gather up the fragments. Please, we must always take care that we make no waste of any of God's good provisions. He has given each one of us as disciples of Christ many provisions to spread the Gospel, the question is how are we using it? Are we wasting it? Are you sharing the spiritual food of Christ.

Finally we get to the realization that Christ was God in John 6:14 "Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." The miracles which Christ did clearly demonstrate that he was the Messiah, a teacher come from God, the great prophet. How could anyone but God come into the world and do all the signs that He had done. Who else could feed so many on so little. In John 6:15 they were ready to come and make Him king, who else, but the messiah, could do such things. Jesus is the Messiah, He is our Lord and Savior! We are here to serve Him and do as he has commanded us to do.

Tragically, most believers do not know or do not accept that we are God's Plan A for reaching the world and that there is no Plan B. Too often our idea of being on a mission with God is inviting our unbelieving friends and family to church so the Priest can convince them to accept Christ. We are all servant at Christ table and all equal in feeding the spiritual food.

God wants us to grow spiritually, to be fed and to feed. Churches must provided spiritual food that moves people to greater levels of commitment, with ever increasing levels of discipleship. We must build a process in our churches to grow people, so they can be transformed. Stagnation is gone. People are not stuck in the same place. Are you growing and being transformed by the spiritual food of Christ?