

**“Take Take Take”**



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July 28, 2024 | 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God, Amen.

- This morning's Gospel opens with a crowd following Jesus because he was healing everyone who was sick
  - Jesus had become an absolute phenomenon
  - The biggest thing in world at the moment
  - But I'm not going to preach about that.
- Next it mentions the Passover, and that people are mobbing him in the Galilee, instead of journeying to Jerusalem like everyone else
  - They're beginning to see Jesus as more important than their own customs
  - But I'm not going to preach about that.
- Then Jesus asks Philip to buy food for thousands and thousands of people
  - And Philip responds with the obvious: they can't afford something like that
  - As if Jesus was stupid, and needed to have that explained to him.
  - But I'm not going to preach about that.

- Then Andrew points out that one boy has offered his lunch of five loaves and two fish.
  - It would seem that, out of all these thousands of people, there's only one who thought ahead? And he's a kid?
  - Or at least, he's the only one honest enough to admit it and generous enough to offer it
  - Maybe everyone else would be happy to share with one other person...
  - But what's the point when the problem is so massive, you can't hope to put a dent in it by yourself?
  - But I'm not going to preach about that.
- We all know what happens after that. Jesus has everyone sit down...
  - Takes the five loaves and two fish...
  - He blesses God and breaks them up into pieces
  - And more than 5,000 people are fed. Probably twice that.
  - And there are 12 baskets left over.
  - One basket for each disciple? One representing each of the tribes of Israel?

- It's an astonishing miracle. Like the water-into-wine at the wedding, it's so full of abundance and extravagance
- It paints a picture, not only of the power of God, but of the magnanimous love of God
- But... what? You guessed it.
- I'm not going to preach about that.
- It's what happened after the miraculous meal that deserves our attention
  - Because it never gets any.
  - What does it say? The people were about to take him by force to make him their king.
  - That's crazy.
  - You meet someone who demonstrates that kind of awesome power, and overwhelming compassion...
  - So you think you can "take him by force"?
  - You think you can smash a crown on his head and toss him up onto a throne against his will?
- But the Gospel mentions it twice.
  - That's what the people tried to do

- And a couple verses later, that's what the disciples tried to do.
- They saw Jesus walking on the stormy water (another miracle I'm not preaching about today)...
- And they tried to "take him" into the boat.
- But suddenly they ran aground, and Jesus was gone.
- This is the only aspect of this Gospel reading that could explain why it was paired with the OT story of David & Bathsheba.
  - David was chosen by God to have all this power
  - He was entrusted with authority, because of his integrity
  - But, like basically every monarch in history, he let it go to his head
  - He believed he deserved to be chosen, and thus, that he deserved to have other nice things too
  - So when he saw a woman named Bathsheba bathing on her roof, and wanted to have her, he simply *took* her. And he could, because David had power and Bathsheba didn't.
  - And when she became pregnant and David didn't want a scandal, he tried to trick her husband Uriah into thinking the

baby was his. He *took* Uriah from the battlefield, and tried to manipulate him. But when that didn't work, he *took* him again, to the front lines of battle where he was killed.

- And he could do this. Because David had power, and Uriah didn't.
- This is the climax of David's tragic story, as Israel's preeminent anti-hero.
  - We had every reason to believe in David
  - To hope that he was the one who would really fulfill the covenant promise to Abraham
  - But it turned out that even David couldn't be trusted with power.
  - He was anointed to give of himself to the people
  - But in the end all he could do was "take take take"
- It would be another 1,000 years before someone would get another chance
  - And it would be a Son of David to do it.
  - Early on, he had the opportunity to sell out his authority, like his forefather David did.

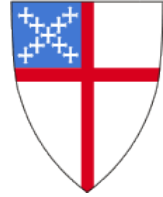
- But he stood firm.
- Jesus didn't take. He chose to give.
- Instead, it was his followers who insisted on taking
  - They didn't have Jesus' power. They didn't even have David's power
  - But as soon as they got close to it, they lost all reason
  - They thought "Here's our big chance! Here is our deliverance from Rome!"
  - And instead of *giving* Jesus their allegiance, and their trust
  - They tried to *take, take, take* it into their own hands.
- I hope I don't have to work all that hard to bring this home for us.
  - We read Paul's words enthusiastically, "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine..."
  - And we welcome that power into our lives...
  - But we want it *on our terms*.
  - And so we take. We take on the name of Jesus, lending credibility to our cause.

- We take on the sacraments of Jesus, parsing out who gets what and when.
- We take on the promise of Jesus, but we try to decide who's in and who's out.
- We define right belief. We set the standards. We write the rules. We appropriate the funds.
- Take. Take. Take.
- And you know what? It's worked.
  - Look at what we've taken for ourselves.
  - We have so much. Because we took so much.
  - But where is Jesus?
  - He's not here.
  - When the people tried to take Jesus by force, what did he do?
  - He withdrew to a mountain by himself.
  - When the disciples tried to take Jesus onto their boat, what happened?
  - They ran aground and he was gone. He kept them safe. But he didn't let them take him on their own terms.



- David can take Bathsheba. And David can take Uriah.
  - But we *cannot take Jesus*. He won't allow it.
  - And if we think we have Jesus all boxed up and packaged and well-defined to fit our agendas and sensibilities...
- The truth is that Jesus has already left the building.
  - What we have in our hands is something else entirely.
  - We have succeeded in the eyes of the world.
  - We have done big things. We have set targets, and we've hit them.
- But when we are ready to stop taking, and start giving, we will say
  - *Now to him* who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly *far more* than all we can ask or imagine.
  - Under our own power, on our own terms, we have done the imaginable.
  - Now it's time to start doing the unimaginable.
  - Amen.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the  
**Sunday closest to July 27**



Proper 12  
Year B  
RCL

<i>Track 1</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>Track 2</i>
2 Samuel 11:1-15		2 Kings 4:42-44
Psalm 14		Psalm 145:10-19
Ephesians 3:14-21		Ephesians 3:14-21
John 6:1-21		John 6:1-21

## **The Collect**

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **Old Testament**

### **2 Samuel 11:1-15**

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to

inquire about the woman. It was reported, “This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

So David sent word to Joab, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house, and wash your feet.” Uriah went out of the king’s house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?” Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.” Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.”

## **The Psalm**

### **Psalm 14**

#### *Dixit insipiens*

- 1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." \*  
All are corrupt and commit abominable acts;  
there is none who does any good.
- 2 The LORD looks down from heaven upon us all, \*  
to see if there is any who is wise,  
if there is one who seeks after God.
- 3 Every one has proved faithless;  
all alike have turned bad; \*  
there is none who does good; no, not one.
- 4 Have they no knowledge, all those evildoers \*  
who eat up my people like bread  
and do not call upon the LORD?
- 5 See how they tremble with fear, \*  
because God is in the company of the righteous.
- 6 Their aim is to confound the plans of the afflicted, \*  
but the LORD is their refuge.
- 7 Oh, that Israel's deliverance would come out of Zion! \*  
when the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,  
Jacob will rejoice and Israel be glad.

## **The Epistle**

### **Ephesians 3:14-21**

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray 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.

Now to *him* who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

## The Gospel

### John 6:1-21

Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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*The Collects, Psalms and Canticles are from the Book of Common Prayer, 1979.*

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