

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Today is Wednesday, April 17 and we are studying the Gospel of John.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, as I begin another day, I seek your face. I calm the chattering of my busy mind, slow my breathing, and focus on you - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As I continue to study the Gospel of John, open my heart and mind to hear the particular message you have for me today. Bring your blessing with the reading of this holy word. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:30-35

REFLECTION

In the sixth chapter of John, Jesus left the people after he taught them and fed them. They were full of the loaves and the fishes, they consumed a miraculous meal on the grassy hillside. Then they followed him. They wanted more. More of the food? Or more of the teaching? Or more of him? He told them what the real food is - it is him, the Son of God, the One whom God sent. All they need to do is believe in him. Jesus told them he is the true bread from heaven, like the manna that came down in the wilderness when the people journeyed hungry through the desert, he is the bread that came down from heaven to give life. Life to the world. Jesus said, I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty (John 6:35).

The stomach makes noise. Have you ever heard your stomach growl? Have you ever been somewhere, usually a quiet place and just when you would prefer it not to, your stomach that has a mind of its own begins to make noises? What makes the stomach growl? Apparently it is a common occurrence that happens to people all the time. When our stomach is empty it is the loudest and most noticeable. And uncontrollable. When someone is spiritually hungry or spiritually empty, they will start growling too. I have noticed my growling when I am in a bad mood, have a bad attitude, or when I am negative, cynical, impatient or critical. Maybe I am growling at the people I love. Maybe I am growling at the people with whom I work. Maybe I am growling at the sales clerk. Perhaps I am hungry, not physically hungry, but spiritually empty. Do you know someone who is growly? Someone who is angry, sad, negative, impatient, intolerant, mean, tearing others down, breaking things apart? Maybe they are empty. Empty of God.

Mother Teresa said, "Suffering is increasing in the world. People are hungry for something more beautiful, for something greater than the people around them can give. There is a great hunger for God in the world. Everywhere there is much suffering, but there is also great hunger for God." Are you hungry? Are you empty inside and want to be filled with "you don't know what"? Some believe there is a God-shaped hole inside each of us. A God-shaped hole of emptiness that cannot be filled by anyone or anything other than God. We try throughout our lives to fill the hole with other things, other people, and it helps for a while, but it remains unfilled.

Ask: How is it with my soul today - am I empty or filled? Have I realized the satisfying nourishment Jesus offers - the Bread of Heaven who came down to give me life?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Lord Jesus, forgive me when I look for you in the wrong places and spend my time filling myself with the wrong things. You are the bread of heaven that gives life to the world. Come, like manna in the wilderness of my existence, come from heaven and bring me life. I hunger and thirst for you, satisfy the longings of my soul like nothing and no one else can. Go with me through the course of my day and remind me to have faith and trust you at every turn. Amen.