

Homily 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B (5.8.18)

### **God has 'set His seal on Jesus', our Bread of Life**

We get, in the year of Mark here, we get supplements from John, because Mark's only a short gospel. But John is a good commentary on the miracle that we listened to last week in Mark. And it's very true to our own experience. It doesn't look it at first, it looks clogged with clumsy arguments, but it's much richer than that. The crowd come running after Jesus, and Jesus sees that they just want the basic things of life, and they don't seek the deeper things, they haven't seen the signs. And we can be a bit like that on the surface in our prayer life maybe, in our dealings with God, just wanting the ordinary things to be secured and safe, but not seeking to delve a bit inward to grow. I don't know? I know I sometimes skate on the surface.

And so when Jesus challenges them, I love the response, "Well, tell us what to do." Now, I read somewhere, ages ago, that the Jews actually believed there were three types of people, not the good, the bad, and the ugly, but the good, the bad, and the in-between.

And they thought in-betweeners, the bad were destined for hell. They believed that the in-betweeners, if they did a lot of good works, God would redeem them. So they're asking for a shopping list,

"Tell us what to do and we'll bargain with you. You'll give us this, we'll give you that."

"Have you bargained with God?" I did when I was younger. I certainly have in prayer. If you do this I'll do that, and it's a bit tricky, bit tricky. So it's much truer to life than you think, and it's about the spirituality that Jesus is addressing to correct us.

And so they challenge him on this, by saying 'well, Moses gave us bread from heaven', The point they're making of course, is very good because in the Jewish faith, in the Jewish tradition, it was believed that before the temple had been ransacked, some of the bread of the desert had been preserved in a jar. There was all this evidence, and they believed that when the Messiah came, the sign would be he'd do greater things than Moses did. And they've seen Jesus feed a few people in the desert and not seeing it as something coming down from God direct as it did to their ancestors. But Jesus points out,

"Well, it wasn't Moses who did it. It was my Father who gave you the bread from heaven"

And he says here... that they have missed the sign, 'What sign will you give us' because he doesn't seem to give them one does he?

Jesus says,

"The kind of food that the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the father, God himself, **has set** his seal."

Now, that tense is very important and it's in all the translations. I've been checking bibles today just to see if I was right. It's the prophetic perfect because "has set", here, has the implication that God has already sealed Jesus. He is a living sign of the truth. But also meaning to be sealed in the future.

Now, in the ancient world, and we don't perhaps have the same understanding, seals were much more important than signatures because everybody wasn't literate. So a seal on something meant that this is valid, this is real. They even did it right down to bags of corn. They would put a seal on them to show the merchant was saying 'I'm guaranteeing the quality of these contents'. So this is a very powerful phrase He's using to them. We still use that phrase in confirmation, of course, that God has set His seal on you and me.

But here, 'has set' his seal, Christ, of course, is referring to when the Spirit descended on Him at the baptism of John, that that was setting the seal of his mission. But this prophetic perfect has this sense of and yet to be fulfilled in it, and of course Jesus, even though the crowd didn't realise it, is referring to his death and resurrection, that this will be the final sign, that the seal will be set to prove he is the bread of life when God vindicates Him from death.