

Sermon for 7/29/18 Proper 12B

In today's reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Paul says: "I pray that, according to the riches (of the Father's) 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 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"

And we need God's grounding love in our lives just as God has served those in the past. In today's readings, we hear about the power of God at work through Elisha and in the ministry of Jesus.

In Second Kings, God, with love, through Elisha, fed the 100 gathered with Spiritual food with some left over and through the loving ministry of Jesus. When the 5000 people gathered with Jesus, in John's Gospel, they probably remembered Elisha's feeding of the 100 when Jesus gave thanks to the Father, and fed those gathered spiritual food with an abundance left over. And then, in the second part of the gospel, when the disciples were struggling, they sought out Jesus and immediately reached land.

God, through the Prophet Elisha, fed the people spiritual food. And, in the ministry of Jesus as God among us, also fed the people in need of spiritual sustenance with abundance and responded to the disciple's need in their distress by bringing them to a place of calm. God - with love, was working in the world and ministering to the needs of the people.

God is in the world now and God is in us and in this place, Christ Church. We are God's people, the Body of Christ. And, as the body of Christ, we are Christ's love both in this place and in the world.

As a community of faith, together, we are fed through our worship, the breaking of bread, and the love and support we offer each other in

both difficult times and times of joy and celebration.

This past Thursday, we were with those near and dear to Shirley and Jim Davis and their family as we gathered for Jim's memorial service. This church was bursting with love for Shirley, the family and the memory of Jim, who was loved and respected by so many, as we mourned and celebrated his life and death. There was grief and joy, and the love was absolutely palpable.

This is what church is all about - we gather in community to worship, give ourselves to God and receive God's love and sustenance, which enable us to support each other in all our joys and sorrows, and serve as Christ in the world as we are guided by the Holy Spirit, both individually and collectively within Christ Church and in the world in our community.

We have examples of serving community needs going on right now in another area of our state. We are all aware of the devastation that the Carr Fire is causing in the areas to the west of Redding and now in Redding itself. There is so much loss - of lives, homes, business and the need for shelter and safety for thousands of evacuees. People affected by the fires may be ones who are close to us or family to others in our community with some who may be placing their lives at risk while serving on the front lines. My nephew and his family are in east Redding and are currently safe but so many are not OK, having been evacuated and in need of food, shelter and support.

Churches have come forward to offer help in the middle of all this need. In Redding, All Saints Episcopal Church on Benton Drive was a place of shelter for members of their parish and others when the Carr Fire was west of the city. Then they, too, needed to evacuate. A local Lutheran Church in Redding, currently well away from the fire, has opened their doors to the All Saints congregation for worship and community. Grace Baptist Church is offering shelter to those displaced by the fire in addition to Shasta College in Redding, Red Bluff Vineyard Church in Red Bluff, Cornerstone Fellowship in Anderson and St. John's Episcopal Church, in Chico. For evacuees going to Weaverville, the CrossPointe Community Church is offering

shelter in addition to Trinity High School. Faith communities are stepping up to serve the needs of the world in their communities!

We gather here with our church community to worship and be fed by the Spirit, receiving the sustenance we need to serve both our church family and our community . We are God's own through Christ and, guided by the Holy Spirit, we offer back to God ourselves and our spiritual gifts.

God will work through us just as God did through the Prophet Elisha and the ministry of Jesus, giving us strength and courage to do the work we are called to do.

The closing part of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is well worth repeating:

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

We are called to manifest God's love as the Body of Christ
We are called to bring God's transforming love to all people
and, in the words of today's dismissal, we are called to
"Go in peace to Love and serve the Lord"