

The gospel reading from John, this morning continues the theme of last Sunday. That theme tells us that Jesus is our spiritual food and drink, the source of the soul's nourishment. If we make him the focus of our lives, then we find not only strength for day to day living but also a relationship that binds us to him forever. To quote from today's gospel, Jesus said, "He who eats this bread will live forever." This is almost an exact replication of the gospel words from last week. In each case, Jesus refers to those who are in spiritual communion with himself.

In times such as ours today, this promise takes on special and reassuring meaning. No matter where we stand on the issues that we face today, in our church, our society, our nation or our world, the gospel tells us that if we bind ourselves to God through Jesus Christ God will be faithful and steadfast in turn. Last Sunday, in the verses immediately preceding those for this morning, we found assurance that Jesus is always faithful. He will never, under any circumstances, turn away from us. In the gospel this morning, the assurance continues. Jesus tells us that he abides with the faithful.

This tells us that so long as we abide in a spiritual commitment to Jesus, God's goodness will prevail in our lives, however that plays out. Evil cannot dominate. Why is this? Christians believe that Jesus has already won the victory over evil. It is a done deal. Jesus fought his battle on the Cross and won the day, and it is a day that lasts forever. He overcame evil; he overcame chaos. He overcame doubt and confusion. The victory is his. The Christian challenge is to remain faithful to him at all times and in all places so that we share in the victory. Our Lord's promise is that we will share in his victory, if we abide in him; that is, if we remain loyal, if we remain faithful.

We need to hear that remaining faithful has everything to do with integrity, commitment and intent. It doesn't have all that much to do with always being right, of never making a mistake, of never sinning. Those who believe that they have perfect understanding of God's will are on, I think, very thin ice. In the words of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways. God told us, through Isaiah, that his ways are higher than ours, his thoughts greater than ours. To put what God was saying in a nutshell, he warned us against being presumptuous. Unfortunately, many people never learn this. What matters, in terms of righteousness, is living out Christ's love ethic, as best we can, as faithfully as we can. If we do this, we give the Lord what he needs from us, in order to mold us and form us as he wills.

This is true for individuals but it is true also in the aggregate, meaning it is true for the Church. If the Church lives out Christ's love ethic, to the best of its ability, being true to the faith delivered by the Lord, through the apostles, the Church has nothing to fear. But the apostolic faith, as we like to call it, is a faith grounded in the commandments to love

God and neighbor, and in that love there must be a willingness to let the Holy Spirit guide us to all truth. Sometimes, the truth may surprise us. *Amen.*