Devotional Reflection, Thursday, August 20, 2026
Proper 15, the week of the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

The Secret of Life is Love

Key phrases for reflection from today's Gospel reading:
25When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' 26Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.'

You will find the full text of today's Gospel at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (*BCP*, 981)
AM Psalm 131, 132, [133]; PM Psalm 134, 135
Job 1:1-22; Acts 8:26-40; John 6:16-27

Today we celebrate the Feast of Bernard of Clairvaux. (See below.)

David's Reflections

John's first twelve chapters follow a pattern. A sign of Jesus, one of his miracles, gets unfolded and explained through dialogue with which it is connected in the text before or after the sign. Here, the sign, the account of feeding of the 5,000, occurs in the first fifteen verses, and the remainder of the chapter reports a running dialogue that the miracle provokes. It is in that dialogue that we find revealed the identity of Jesus as the bread of life.

In this Gospel, the disciples got caught in a squall on the Sea of Galilee and Jesus walked to them on the water and got them through the storm to the other side. The crowd followed in boats the next day. John's Gospel thrives on the double entendre, the double meaning. Here, the question of the crowd, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" has to do with when Jesus crossed the lake. But, for John (and for

us, the enlightened readers), the question sounds like, "Rabbi, when did you come to earth?"

Jesus' answer contains another double entendre. "You did not seek me because you saw the sign, but because you ate the loaves and were filled." In other words, "You did not get the symbolic significance of the miracle, that I am the Bread of Life. You're just looking for another meal." Jesus questioned their motives for seeking him.

Now, there's a question that hooks me. Why am I a priest? Why am I spending my life in the church? Why am I here, serving as priest in charge at Emmanuel and St. Anne's? Is it because I understand that Jesus is the Living Bread and that human souls all over this two-county area live with a deep hunger for transcendence and connection and transformation?

For all of us, motivation probably almost always lacks absolute purity and probably always suffers some taint of inner darkness and selfishness. All the more reason to stand guard over our motives, our reasons for doing and being. When we are at our best, what we do arises primarily out of a genuine concern for the well being of others and a genuine desire to do what we believe the Christ who pours himself out for us in Holy Eucharist desires of us. Life then becomes all about pouring ourselves out for the one who pours himself out for us..

"You did not seek me because you saw the sign, but because you ate the loaves and were filled." Just which hungers of our souls get first billing?

As the poet Gregory Orr wrote in "The Body of the Beloved."

When I open the book
I hear the poets whisper and weep,
Laugh and lament.
In a thousand languages
They say the same thing:
"We lived. The secret of life
is love, that casts its wing
over all suffering, that takes
in its arms the hurt child,

that rises green from the fallen seed."+

+Gregory Orr, from "The Body of the Beloved." *Meridian*, Issue 14, Fall/Winter 2004

Collect of the Day, Proper 15, the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of his redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 233)

Today we celebrate the Feast of Bernard of Clairvaux, abbot, theologian, and poet (died 20 Aug 1153 CE .)
http://satucket.com/lectionary/Bernard_Clairvaux.htm
https://companionsofstbernard.org/about-saint-bernard-of-clairvaux-2/

The Collect of the Feast of Bernard of Clairvaux
O God, by whose grace your servant Bernard of Clairvaux, kindled with the flame of your love, became a burning and a shining light in your church: Grant that we also may be aflame with the spirit of love and discipline and walk before you as children of light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Guidance
O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people; Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*. (BCP 100)

For a child not yet baptized
O eternal God, you have promised to be a father to a thousand generations of those who love and fear you: Bless this child and preserve his/her life; receive *and* enable *him* to receive you, that through the Sacrament of Baptism *he* may become the child of God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 444)

In the Order of Worship for Evening
Almighty, everlasting God, let our prayer in your sight be as incense, the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Give us grace to behold you, present in your Word and Sacraments, and to recognize you in the lives of those around us. Stir up in us the flame of that love which burned in the heart of your Son as he bore his passion, and let it burn in us to eternal life and to the ages of ages. *Amen*. (BCP, 113)

A Collect for Mission
Merciful God, creator of all the peoples of the earth and lover of souls: Have compassion on all who do not know you as you are revealed in your Son Jesus Christ; let your Gospel be preached with grace and power to those who have not heard it; turn the hearts of those who resist it; and bring home to your fold those who have gone astray; that there may be one flock under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*. (BCP, 280)

<u>Daily Office Gospel, John 6:16-27</u>
16When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' 21Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

22 The next day the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there. They also saw that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23Then some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. 25When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' 26Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.'

Daily Offices in the Book of Common Prayer

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *The Book of Common Prayer*
Noonday Prayer, page 103, *Book of Common Prayer*
Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p 109, *Book of Common Prayer*
Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*
Compline (Night Prayer), page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*
Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*