

above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things). The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

John 6:24-35

Jesus teaches the crowds that all they need to do is to believe in the one God. The people ask for a miracle, mentioning the manna that the Israelites received when they were in the wilderness with Moses. In response Jesus tells them that he is the true bread of life and that whoever comes to him will never be hungry or thirsty.

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. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus 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. Do 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." Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Readings COCU 50B

There are two ideas that collide in this week's readings. Firstly we are called to meditate on and give thanks for God's generous grace that sustains and unites us. In the Gospel, the people remember this miracle and ask Jesus what he will do to show them that they should believe in him. His response is to offer himself as the Bread of Life that brings true sustenance. In the Epistle, this same sustaining grace welcomes us into the united community of God, and gives us each gifts that we are to use to build our community up. The second idea flows out of the Old Testament reading, and reveals what happens when we ignore God's generosity and grace, and start to live according to our worst, most selfish and lustful natures. David, to whom God had given the most abundant of blessings in every way, used his power to seduce a poor man's wife and then put the man to death. God does not stay silent in the face of this, but sends the prophet to challenge and confront David. Fortunately David is able to repent, as Psalm 51 reveals, but even this does not stop the consequences of his actions – the internal conflict within his family that ultimately destroyed the unity of God's people and split the kingdom in two. The message is simple, but also very challenging. The tremendous conflicts and struggles in our world can all be reduced to one basic reality. Some people have more than they need and hoard it, and others have too little and are willing to fight to get more. Whether it's issues of power, in which some are disempowered while others cling to control as corporate, political or organisational dictators; or issues of economics in which some fight daily just to survive while others spend small fortunes on their whims; or issues of disease in which some struggle to get the medical care and medicine that they need because of their station in life, while others use their knowledge and opportunities to get wealthy through medical patents and careful distribution of necessary drugs; every justice issue, every war and every violent protest arises because of the inequality, disunity and lack of generosity in our world. God has supplied the manna we need to feed, house and care for everyone in our world. The Bread of Life has shown us the way to life, by believing in his generous way of simplicity. Yet, like David, we continue to grab what we can, even when it hurts others, and we continue to place our own needs and desires over those of others. We must embrace the generous grace of God – not just for us, but as a force that flows through us to others. *(Bible commentary by John van de Laar, Sacredise)*

Psalm 51:1-12

David's psalm of repentance when he ask God to forgive and restore him.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; **according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins. Blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13a

After Bathsheba finished mourning for Uriah, David takes her as his wife. God sends Nathan to confront him with his sin. Using a parable, Nathan gets David to condemn himself and prophesies God's judgment on David. In the end, David's sin is forgiven. When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and

he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

Ephesians 4:1-16

The apostle encourages the believers to accept one another, to live with humility, patience and love, and to nurture their unity, since God is also one. Within this united community each one has gifts given by God's grace and each should use these gifts to build up the community, even as a body is united but has different parts.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far