**SUNDAY 8/15/21**

**SERMON**

**JOHN 6:51-58**

A medical missionary in India helped many people who were going blind

 because of cataracts.

He was able to operate on many people and restored their sight.

They all seemed to be grateful to have regained their sight.

But none of them ever said: "Thank you,"

 because that phrase was not in their dialect.

Instead, they spoke a word that meant, "I will tell your name."

Wherever they went, they would tell the name of the missionary

 who had cured their blindness.

They had received something so wonderful that they eagerly proclaimed it.

Whenever we give thanks to God, we are "telling God's Name".

We are declaring that we believe in a God who actively works in our lives.

We honor Him every time we "tell His name" to others.

Jesus didn't have to do it you know.

He didn't have to leave the palace.

He didn't have to go alone, without His Father, without the angels.

He didn't have to put up with hunger, anger, weariness, frustration.

He didn't have to do it.

But He did.

Because He loved each one of us, He came down to earth,

 to lead and guide us.

He wanted us to know our Heavenly Father's name,

 to know of His love, His Forgiveness, and the way He wants us to live.

He wanted us to experience His joy and enthusiasm.

And so He left the comforts of Heaven and came to earth for each one of us.

Jesus described Himself in many ways:

“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.”

 So we would know how to live.

“I am the Light of the World.”

 So we would not have to wander in the darkness.

“I am the Good Shepherd.”

 So we knew He would watch over us and take care of us.

“I am the Alpha and Omega.”

 So we would know He was with us, from the beginning, to the end.

“I am the Bread of Life.”

 So we would know Death was not the final answer.

He came down to us to feed, nourish, strengthen, and lead us.

Simply because He loves us.

And so we share his love every time we tell others about Him.

There are many unusual ways the African tribes have discovered

 to express thanks to God.

The Massai tribe, a pastoral and hunting people of Kenya and Tanzania,

 bow and put their foreheads on the ground, and say:

“My head is in the dirt in front of you.”

Another tribe sit for a long time in front of the hut of the person

 to whom they wish to give thanks and literally say,

“I sit on the ground before you.”

These African people understand well what thanksgiving is,

 and why it is difficult for us to express it,

 Because, at its very core, thanksgiving is an act of humility.

As we offer thanks to God in a variety of ways,

 we grow closer to Him.

We discover how great His love is, and we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

As we begin to understand His ways we discover many opportunities

 to live His way, and to share His story with others.

By what we do and how we live, we honor Him, and thank Him.

We really do make a difference.

But it is so easy to miss the opportunities right in front of us.

Imagine a man fishing.

He has a bucket.

He has bait.

He has a fishing pole.

He has a 12-inch ruler which is broken off at the 10-inch mark.

He casts out his line and pulls in a fish and measures it.

It is very small, only 7 inches, and he puts it in his bucket.

He keeps the little fish.

Then he revels in a 24-inch whopper.

Seeing it's bigger than his ruler, he throws it back in the water!

Repeatedly, the man kept every fish smaller than 10 inches,

 and throws all the bigger fish back.

A stranger watched this odd behavior and asked him why

 he threw the large fish back into the water.

The man told him: "My wife only has a 10 inch frying pan."

He could have bought his wife a larger frying pan.

He could have cut the larger fish in half.

But he didn't.

How often do we miss sharing God's love because the situation seems too big?

Have we ever rejected the opportunities of God

 because they are bigger than our frying pan?

Sometimes we simply need to know God's ways are bigger than out ways.

With Him guiding us, we can do amazing things.

Don't miss all the opportunities God gives us.

Michael Hernandez has written a piece called

“Property Laws as Viewed by a Toddler.”

Included are the following toddler laws:

 If I like it, it's mine.

 If it's in my hands, it's mine.

 If I can take it from you, it's mine.

 If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.

 If it looks like it's mine, it's mine.

 If I saw it first, it's mine.

 If I can see it, it's mine.

 If I want it, it's mine.

 If I think I can play with it better than you can, it's mine.

 If I play with it long enough, it's mine.

 If you are playing with something else and you put it down, it's mine."

This may be cute for toddlers, but it is not the way God wants us to live.

He wants us to remember everything is His.

God wants us to make the most of every opportunity,

 to see the opportunity in even mundane moments.

And most of all, to remember everything belongs to God.

God made it all, and wants us to use everything He has given us,

 to teach and help others.

Jack Hinton was on a short-term mission trip to the island of Tobago.

He was leading worship at the leper colony and after he gave the final prayer,

 he asked if anyone had a request for the final hymn.

A woman was in the congregation

 who had been facing away from the pulpit during the entire service.

She turned around and Jack Hinton was shocked into silence.

He stared at the most hideous face he had ever seen.

The woman's nose and ears were entirely gone.

The disease had destroyed her lips as well.

She lifted a fingerless hand in the air and asked:

“Can we sing 'Count Your Many Blessings'?”

They did.

With more emotion, enthusiasm, and faith than Hinton had ever heard it sung.

As the service ended, overcome with emotion, one of the other leaders said:

“Jack, I guess you will never be able to sing that song again.”

“Yes I will," he replied. "But I will never sing it the same way.”

When we come into God's presence, we look at life differently.

We see things in a different light, with greater understanding.

As we live God's way, we discover new opportunities,

 a whole new way of seeing and understanding others.

Jesus came to show us a whole new way of living.

He teaches, guides, nourishes, and strengthens us.

Not because He wants us to work harder and do more,

 but because He wants us to experience the joy

 of living our Heavenly Father's way.

AMEN