

August 4, 2024 – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

“The Seal of God” by Pastor Julio Romero

Gospel: John 6:24-35

The Gospel that I just read to you is a continuation of the “Feeding of the Five Thousand” story. And this is how I see this story unfolded on that day in the life of Jesus.

The Lord and His disciples went from their home village of Capernaum to the villages on the other side of the Lake of Galilee. Jesus was there to continue with His ministry of healing and teaching. As the crowd became bigger and bigger and time went by, the people got hungry. It was then that the Lord Jesus fed them with five loaves of bread and two fish. Soon after that the disciples returned to Capernaum and the Lord followed them, walking on water. I just gave you a short version of the story. In today’s Gospel, we learn that when the people who were miraculously fed didn’t see Jesus, they got in their boats and crossed the Lake to Capernaum looking for the Lord Jesus.

The first thing they said to the Lord was, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” ²⁶*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. 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.”*

I look at these words from our Lord Jesus as “faith building words”. He wants people to believe in Him, to trust Him, to experience a conversion of mind and soul. Remember that after the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and the fish, the people wanted to crown Jesus their king. They wanted Jesus to rule over them, and that is what our Lord Jesus wants, but for the right reasons, not for the reasons the people wanted Him as their king.

The Lord Jesus’ plan, which is God’s plan, is to touch our hearts, to touch our minds, not just our stomachs. Those people were excited with Jesus because he quenched their hunger with the food that perishes, but Jesus wants to feed us with the food that endures for eternal life and that bread is Jesus himself. The Bread of Life that has the approval, the love, the assurance, the “seal” of His Father.

The Lord Jesus said, *“It is on Him that God the Father has set his seal.”* This is a line that caught my attention and so I did some research about it. This is what I found:

The word “seal” in the New Testament comes from a Greek word that means “to stamp with a private mark” in the interest of keeping something secret or protecting or preserving the sealed object. Seals were used for official business: a Roman centurion, for instance, might have sealed a document that was meant only for the eyes of his superior. If the seal were broken, the one receiving the document would know that the letter had been tampered with or read by someone other than the sealer.

Jesus did not show up in this world on His own, He came with the seal of His Father. The Father’s seal is the seal of love; love is the private mark of God. The Gospel of John in Chapter 3 reminds us of that: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life.”*

The mark of God is love. Love is the seal He is known for, which also reminds me that we, at our baptism, receive the same seal, the same mark of God, the oil on our foreheads and the following words: “Child of God you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever”. These are signs of affirmation that we have been given the same mark of love that God is known for.

The people who followed the Lord Jesus after they were fed with the multiplication of the bread and the fish could see in Jesus the seal of God: in Him, the love, the care, the divine power to heal and perform other wonders. They wanted Him to be their King, to rule over them.

That’s what the mark of God does: it turns you into a person with charisma, with special gifts, so that people around you can trust you, feel free from any tension, feel at ease and free to be who they are.

To grow in our Christian character, I think it is important to always keep in mind that we have the seal, the mark of God, with us, and that is what we all should be known for. This makes me ask, “What is it that people around us know us for? What are our personal marks, what is our seal?”

Are we people with charisma, with the gifts of the Spirit? Do people feel at ease, free, comfortable with us? Do they trust us, or would they rather prefer to stay away from us and have nothing to do with us?

The Lord Jesus told his disciples to wear that mark, the seal of His Father, everywhere they went, to show it to everyone they met. *“Love one another as I have loved you, that way everyone will know that you are my disciples,”* He said.

The seal of God has a cascade of things that define who we are and how we relate to one another. It builds character, friendship, community, creates miracles, stories, good stories. It generates faith and brings us closer together.

The mark of God is the glue that keeps this community together. That seal, that mark, is the food that Jesus wants to feed us with, the food that never perishes. It is eternal, and the right food for the journey together in this world until the final call comes to join God in heaven.

As the body of Christ in the world, let's share and show everyone that the stamp, the seal of God, is upon us, and let's grow in charisma, in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May God help us to do so. *Amen.*