

## Drawn to God 10 Pentecost B

“Is not this Jesus the little lad we all knew growing up, whose mom and dad we know?” This sounds a bit like the surprise of family and friends when that little child grows up faster than they realized. When that child now grown up starts talking about grown up things, there is amazement. That is the way it is when we hang around long enough to see children grow up. The babies being baptized today (9:30AM) will one day get bigger and talk and walk among us as never before. Many of us will remember the conversations they had during church as babes and how they made us smile.

The people who remembered Jesus had quite a surprise. What did he mean by boldly saying he was the “bread of life that came down from heaven?” They were complaining about Him, but Jesus set the record straight.

What Jesus says next to the complainers both affirms from where He came and proclaims His gospel. “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.”

What draws you to be here today? Is it Jesus and His Father that draws you? Do you have a desire to feel their presence in God's house...? Perhaps it is little babies being baptized that brings you?

Some people are drawn by the possibility of being led by God when they come to church. Others are drawn by the desire for God's help in a time of need, or for forgiveness. It should be a given, but not always given in the time frame we desire. Some give up when their desires are not met. In short, people are drawn to God by many reasons: prayer, spiritual guidance, thanksgiving for His goodness, a sense of family, being cared for and at times some fun. Some come to Jesus because they are drawn by someone greater than themselves, a person with goodness and acceptance they don't have.

Only a few are drawn to God foremost because of the promise of eternal life. It is enough to be occupied with this life. No one has a high-definition picture of what eternal life will look like. It seems far away and no one knows for sure where we will wake up and find ourselves. Most Christians I suppose believe there is a better place that awaits us.

Being led toward God comes with being taught. I remember one of my first catechism teachers, who taught in her home. She was a friend of my parents. So I had to be good, or my parents would hear about it all too quickly. Later catechism was taught at church in a big class so it was easier to be a kid. Jesus quoted the prophets with their words "they shall all be taught by God." I take "all" to mean everyone is taught from babies to grandparents. At some point in the process, the Holy Spirit takes over and completes our lessons. Those who are taught begin to

understand the meaning and purpose of Jesus' teaching. It starts with the little ones.

And parents are responsible for teaching children the path they should follow. If parents don't receive the teachings and guidance they need, then who will teach the children?

There is one caveat: baby babble! Infants speak a language unintelligible to everyone except the Heavenly Father. Many believe that the veil between Heaven and Earth is very thin for an infant; that children are closer to God. Parents may think baby is talking to them. Perhaps the babble is saying more than adults can understand. Babies may be praying to God in an unknown tongue. Speaking in tongues started way before Pentecost. It's no wonder that babies coo with such happiness. They hear God and have regular talkback. Jesus said of children, "Allow them to come to me, for of such is the kingdom." Such children come to Jesus because their attitudes are pure and their ears are open to hear Him.

Jesus replies to His detractors, "*Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.*" Hearing and learning from the Father starts with parents teaching their children much like a mother bird brings food to the nest for her chicks. Eventually they are strong enough to find food for themselves. Children learn to tune into needs that are beyond what they put into their mouth. They have inquiring minds. They explore. They begin to ask questions. As long as children have a chance at learning from God, they will most likely continue until they come to Jesus and believe.

They will have a chance to believe for themselves based on what they hear and what they *learn* from God. That is the goal for the Christian faith. Training them when they are young will pave the way to respond to Jesus in faith. Believing what Jesus says, leads to eternal life. That sounds rather simple. Until one considers that believing does not happen in a vacuum. No one comes to faith by themselves. Someone had to plant the seed. Someone else had to water it. Truly believing also means acting on those teachings. If one truly believes, then it changes the way one lives.

Belief happens because of faithful Christian leadership willing to help others tune into God's voice. Only then will a piece of bread become more than just a symbol. Only then can a child of God take the bread at God's table, eat and experience the life of Jesus Christ.

Today we renew our belief that Jesus is among us, having died, having been buried and risen again. We were baptized into that faith, into his mystical body and the family of God. May the Lord Jesus Christ draw you into Himself and receive your embrace. AMEN

