

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Tenth Sunday after Trinity  
August 5, 2018

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Nobody taught like Our Lord. Jesus. And among the many noticeable and wonderful things about it is this: The Lord looks at earthly things as shadows of the heavenly. Our approach is the opposite. Christians acknowledge our hope is in Heaven. But we think of Heaven as a shadowy existence to be postponed as long as our health and enjoyment of life hold out! In the St Theresa Rectory dining room when we thank the cooks for a great meal we often say “You will go straight to Heaven *but not yet!*” When Our Lord said “I have come that ye have life and have it more abundantly” we think He must refer to life now. Once our bodies are laid to rest, whatever life continues will be in a *diminished form*. For us, Heaven seems both distant and mostly smoke and mirrors.

Today’s gospel encourages us to turn our view around. The gospel shows us Our Lord always treating the material things of earth as the *mere shadow* of the true realities. Earthly things are copies of which the original is in Heaven. That is why He counsels us: “Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abides unto eternal Life.”

Our view is Christ should have said to the Samaritan woman at the well: “See the water? Divine grace is something like that.” But the Lord doesn’t do that! He says “See that water? If you knew the gift of God, and Who It is that saith to thee, give me to drink, He would have given thee living water.” *Living water!* So what was the woman looking at in Jacob’s well? It was *H2O*. The Lord’s answer is the purest water in the whole world is only an inferior copy of the living stream, which flows through the city of God.

We get the same emphasis in the Lord’s teaching about the vine and branches. Jesus does not say His closeness to His followers is something like the vine on a hedge and the branches that stem from it. Rather, *the true vine* is something else. Whatever you see growing on the fence is only a copy of the reality, which exists in His Mystical Body, the Church.

Our Lord Jesus took upon Himself perfect humanity. But, come from Heaven, He could still never quite look upon material things from our human point of view.

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Jesus always sees the love and beauty which exist in the supernatural realm behind these material things expressed in the natural realm.

In today's gospel Jesus recalls the incident of the feeding of ancient Israel with *manna* in the desert. Despite what the Psalmist had said, Jesus tells His followers *manna* was not Bread from Heaven. It was bread which relieves physical hunger. And it perishes. Manna has a shelf life like the food in your refrigerator you have to throw away. The bread eaten just now by the five thousand was also not the true bread. To be very clear about this Jesus declared: "I am the bread of life, the living bread which came down from Heaven."

Almighty God gave ancient Israel the *manna*, and Christ gave the five thousand the multiplied loaves. Both were in preparation for the Holy Eucharist. In Christ's Church, centered on the Eucharist, when we look back on those Biblical events, these events remind us of the Eucharist. Whenever we see ordinary bread we recognize a copy preparing us for the real food from Heaven *which is Christ Himself*.

Christ calls us away from a world of smoke and mirrors, shadows and copies, to a world of reality. *The realty is the Heavenly realm*. At the Transfiguration, the Feast of which is observed tomorrow, Peter, James, and John lifted the corner of the tent and peeked inside for a brief moment to see the Glory of God. Jesus calls us from a world where the things for which we labor pass away, to the works of God which shall never pass away. God's things contain the beauty and sustenance which are the pure food for our souls *and their eternal happiness*.