

THE BREAD OF HEAVEN

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Those complaining Israelites out in the desert longing to be back in Egypt because they could sit down eat meat and as much other food as they wanted. God send them meat to eat in the evening and as much bread as they wanted in the morning but they weren't satisfied. Manna, free food sent down from heaven each day. Just think about it they just had to collect your 2 quarts of food for each member of the family. Think about how much time you would save, money, time and energy. What's for dinner tonight? "Manna". How many ways can you prepare manna? Was there ways of sharing manna recipes? It reminds me of zucchini. When zucchini became popular I think we had sauté zucchini, zucchini with tomatoes, onions and peppers, zucchini boats filled with sausage and tomatoes, and even zucchini coffee cake. There was a time when I didn't want to see another zucchini! I tried to be grateful and come home to a prepared meal but I'm still not fond of zucchini. Can't you just see those Israelites "manna again"!

As I think back on my school lunches my favorite was wheat bread and crunchy peanut butter and an apple. It's still my favorite meal if I'm tired or in a hurry. Makes me wonder what that manna tasted like. Bread was a staple in the Old and New Testament times. Moses feeding the Israelites, Jesus gave the crowd more than manna He gave them barley loaves and fishes and fed 5, 000.

The crowd who gathered in Capernaum did ask how Jesus got there ahead of them, even though they knew that he had not gone with the disciples in the boat the evening before, but rather they asked "when did you get here?" And Jesus responds by saying: "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."

Bread and water: the things that sustain our physical life. God doesn't only feed only our bodies but He wants us to feed our souls. He tells them to work for food that endures, perhaps a between-the-lines reference to manna that lasted only one day.

John wants us to know that Jesus is more than a wonder worker. That he is more than one who is able to provide the food that our bodies need, that food which already exists in abundance upon this earth.

John wants us to know that Jesus came to feed us with what lasts unto eternal life that he came to give us the bread of heaven, that he is the bread of heaven; the one who, if we believe in him, is able to nourish us unto eternity, the one who is, in fact, and the bread of life.

We are a hungry and thirsty people, and we fill up on things that don't really feed our deep needs. How many of us eat junk food instead of nice healthy vegetables? Do we drink soda instead of water and fruit juices? Do we spend money on things we don't need? How many computers, Ipods, cell phones, TV can we use at one time? Do we take the time to sit quietly to listen to the still small voice of God? John 6:35 tells us, "Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty".

What is God trying to tell us to take time to smell the roses? Would our lives be different if we spent a little more time in silence and a little less plugged into our electronics? The summer is such a good time to get a closer connection to God. Enjoy the laughter of children, watch a bird feeding their young, squirrels chasing up and down the trees. Feeling a cool summer breeze by the lake. Sharing laughter with a friend. Help someone in need of a ride, a friendly voice on the phone or perhaps sharing a meal. Here in our worship this morning let us lay our cares and worries to God and then let us listen to his voice, how much better we feel.

Each of these passages sheds new light on what it means to be part of a community that finds its hope in relationship to God. This “body” calls its members to accountability, but it also provides support, strength, forgiveness, and nourishment. Equipped with the strength of unity created out of mutual trust, and empowered to address difficult issues with words of truth, communities grow together in faith and share that growth with others. As always, we are reminded that the bread – the source of unity, gifts, and the characteristics that sustain it – is God.

As we celebrated the sacrament of Holy Baptism this morning, we celebrate the love of God revealed in the life, and death and resurrection of Christ Jesus and how that love reaches out to embrace all people who would open themselves to receive it. We welcome Griffin into our church family as we have welcomed his sister Shaylynn, and his brothers Caden and Nolan. The waters of baptism are poured that we may become one with the one who gave his life for us.

Jesus says “ I am the bread of life, He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” God, the giver of life to eat the bread of life, calls us that bread provided by him and through him and in him, in Christ Jesus, the bread that we share at our communion table. At the table the bread reminds us of the One who is life’s bread. When broken bread invokes the remembrance and recognition of living bread, we find our manna; all that is necessary for the needs of our spirits, for the nurture of our faith.

But there is a catch. The bread we receive is not intended to merely fill us, but also to commission us. For the bread of life here broken and offered is bread for our living. The gift we receive is this meal imparts the gift we are to become: the very image of God in a world too often seen as void of God’ presence. We have this calling because we have this Christ, the bread of life, come down from heaven to give life to the world! The bread we receive at communion is not intended to merely fill us, but also to commission us. No matter what happens, we are called to believe in God’s continuing work in our lives, to

set our sights on things beyond ourselves and to keep on seeking God' guidance and continue being His disciples.