

The Bread of Life

[Ephesians 4:25-5:2, John 6:35, 41-51](#)

Jesus spent a lot of time eating and drinking with people – his disciples, sinners and tax collectors, the crowds. There is something about coming together around a table and meeting a very basic need of life while entering into fellowship. So as we feast at the table so to speak, we are fulfilling a physical need. While we share stories and conversation around the table we are fulfilling a mental need – increasing knowledge and expanding our scope of understanding. But Jesus reminded the multitudes that there is a third need that must also be met – feeding our souls. Jesus referred to himself as the bread of life.

When we think about bread, it is one of the most basic elements of the human diet. It is interesting that bread does not grow or come directly from a natural source – it has to be made. There is a lot of work that goes into making bread. You may

recall someone in your family that would make bread on bread-making day. An entire day was dedicated to making bread. The ingredients were gathered – flour, lard, eggs (fresh of course), salt, sugar, and of course yeast. You would sometimes worry about the yeast culture – if it died you would have to start a new one and you may not know it died until after you mixed it in and saw the bread didn't rise and was more like matzo. Once the ingredients were gathered they were mixed together in a certain order and then the work began.

I tried to find someone to make bread this week so we could video tape it but this was a very busy week for most folks. Besides, most of us today would toss the ingredients in a bread maker, hit the button and come back later. The work that was involved in kneading the ingredients into stiff dough – this took some muscle and some effort. If the ingredients weren't

thoroughly mixed the bread simply wouldn't cooperate. So you took some time to assimilate the ingredients together into a homogenous dough, placed it in a warm, covered bowl to rise, and you waited. Well, most bread makers of the day simply started the next batch of dough while keeping up with all the regular duties. But time had to pass in order to allow the dough to rise.

Jesus said, "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." At this time in history, many were familiar with the word of God being known as bread. The Torah was routinely referred to as bread for feeding the soul. John's gospel starts out with the words, "In the beginning was the word, and word was with God, and the word was God. And the word was made flesh and dwelled among us." Jesus took the analogy a step farther

and referred to himself as the very word of God – the basic substance of our spiritual lives. Anyone who would believe in Jesus and his teachings would never hunger or thirst again.

Yet in the process of making bread, there is time and effort needed to get the ingredients together in a form that will in turn be the bread we so desperately need. I think we too need to work at taking in the scriptures, study texts, and literally embody the word of God so that it becomes an extension of ourselves. We need to get those ingredients in a form that can be applied to our lives. It is easy to simply read the scriptures and say, “Those are great stories but they have nothing to do with us today.” What I find interesting is how the scriptures have held up against the test of time. It seems the more we study the more we uncover things we never knew about particular passages. They begin to become real for us when we can see others

struggling with everyday issues of providing for a family, finding peace in difficult times, or simply gaining a bit of insight as to why we are here in the first place. The more we take in and embody the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus, the more we are truly feeding our souls with the bread of life.

We live in a country filled with privilege. I believe we are pretty much able to feed our physical bodies adequately. Some of us have done a more than adequate job of feeding our bodies a rich diet. I know growing up there were some lean times in my household, but we never went hungry. Many in our country and around the world cannot say that but for the most part we can. I know at our church dinners, there is always more than enough for everyone to satisfy their hunger with plenty of food to spare.

Most of us have also pursued knowledge. We continue to learn new and different things throughout our lives. Many here may recall their steep learning curve concerning the new inventions know as computers and the internet. Our children today seem to have a natural affinity for these things because they have always been a part of their lives. Does anyone here remember their first bad experience with a microwave? You learn pretty quickly that you need to poke holes in potatoes before trying to nuke them! But we learn – we are constantly learning whether or not we are participating in formal education. We feed our minds by acquiring more and more knowledge. We are hungry for knowledge and work to feed that hunger.

How is it with your soul? That is a classic question that John Wesley would have folks in small disciple groups ask each other. How is it with your soul? Are we starving our souls

while feeding our minds and bodies a rich diet? Some may argue that when we study the scriptures we are simply feeding our minds. There is most definitely a learning process that takes place when we study God's word. Yet when we can go beyond that learning and truly embody the stories and teachings, then we begin to feed our souls. When we take time to meditate and pray and listen for God's response, we begin to feed our souls. When we come together in fellowship one with another and accept each other as members of Christ's holy church, we begin to feed our souls. Even when we work together side by side swinging hammers and pulling up floor boards, because we are united with our brothers and sisters in faith, we are feeding our souls.

When we stop and think of those who were dear to us that have passed away, what is it that you miss the most? Is it that

person's actions or abilities? My father was a decent mechanic. He taught me to throw a ball left-handed as I'm the only lefty in my family besides him. He loved music and could sing a mean tenor. But what I really miss is simply being with him, knowing that he would be a part of my life. It is something we may take for granted until that person is no longer with us.

Jesus wants to be a part of our lives as well. Jesus simply wants to be with us like a true friend who celebrates in the good times and provides a calm center in the raging storms of life. As our bread of life, Jesus provides the way for us to never hunger and never thirst. We are given the incredible gift of eternal life as long as we take in the essential element of our spiritual life. We must accept Jesus as our Savior – our bread of life. We will then have the reassurance that we will never be hungry again.

We will never thirst for and seek peace in our lives as we will have that peace embodied with us through Jesus Christ.

As we go through our routines this week, remember to stop and ask yourself, “How is it with my soul?” Feeding your soul will help to bring true joy to your life, even in the midst of hard times. May God continue to bless us together as the body of Christ while we take in the true bread of life. Amen.