

“Jesus the Bread King”
Eve of Thanksgiving - Wednesday, November 27, 2019 – John 6:25-35/C

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” 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. Do 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.”

Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. – John 6:25-35

Grace and peace to you from God the Creator, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 Amen.

Perhaps you caught the video I posted on our Seasonal Bible Study page on Facebook recently. It was made by Forest Hill South Park Church in Charlotte, NC, and went viral as soon as it was posted a week or so ago. In it, a young man awakens, completely wrapped in Christmas wrapping paper. To his delight, he realizes that he is alive for another day. Then his wife, similarly wrapped, frees her face from paper and he excitedly exclaims that she, too, is alive, and how much he loves her. Then his kids appear, wrapped from head to toe, and you can imagine the rest. The light switch is wrapped, the faucet is wrapped, the shower head sports a bow – as the guy joyously proclaims that they have power, (whenever they want!) and clean water, and even a shower! He has shoes, and clothes - lots of clothes. Breakfast is waiting on the table (we have furniture!) in a large box, and there are keys that go to, (gasp!) a car! to go to his job! The guy is kind of geeky, but the message is crystal clear. We are living abundantly, in a time when many do not have close to “enough.”

Last Wednesday night was our last Confirmation session for the Fall. Our youth were served up a turkey dinner and then they commenced their own Serve Night. In minutes, the entire kitchen was covered in flour - pie crust being mixed, rollers rolling, fillers filling, decorators decorating bags and cutters cutting off edges – all the while runners were moving pie pieces about between stations. 100 personal size pies were completed and delivered the next morning to the Food Pantry at Salem Lutheran Church – where they would be made available along with Thanksgiving meal fixings to those in need this holiday.

For me, beyond the fun of teaching youngsters how to bake pies, was the joy in watching them prepare a sign of their love for some folks they have never met, and probably never will. But, they knew what they were doing. They were doing something amazingly simple that would touch somebody’s heart and fill their stomachs. In my mind, it was a modern day manna from heaven, or the Feeding of the 5,000 – the miraculous multiplication of bread from the abundance

of Jesus, the Bread King - adapted to a scale the kids could manage. This was something they could do to make a difference in the ever-present and global need for bread and clean water.

Have you ever wondered why we use water for Holy Baptism and bread as the earthly element at Holy Communion? Well, obviously, because Jesus did, but think about this: water is available all over the globe (some places more abundantly than others) but water is the foundation of human life. Bread is also universal in its many forms and from many sources: wheat, rye and barley grains make loaves we are familiar with. Another grain, teff, is the gluten free ingredient that makes *injera*, the Ethiopian staple, and just list the others all around the world: Pita, Naan, Cornbread, tortillas, flatbread, grainy bread, crusty bread, pretzels, griddle bread, lefsa. Wherever you go, bread is a staple. And if a person has bread and clean water, they can exist well on this planet.

Isn't it amazing that the simplest things can sustain life, and that something as universal as bread can come in so many shapes, contents, flavors and sizes. Sort of like people. We are connected and yet each of us is unique. And each of us carries within us the power to create abundance where mere sustenance had been. People of Advent, the world is experiencing famine – and the need is increasing every day.

Imagine how those little pies lit up the eyes of children accompanying a parent to pick up their Thanksgiving food? Imagine the impact of an invitation to your table for the widow or widower alone this holiday? Imagine the emotion of that prickly relative who always acts inappropriately at your feast when, this year, you spend time focused just on them. Imagine the joy, when forgiveness enters the room with you. Imagine the gift that your greeting, your embrace, your presence brings with it each time you awaken in another day of life and abundance?

What is the bread of God that we have been given from heaven, that gives life to the world? Well, I tell you it does not come from Amazon or Nieman-Marcus. You cannot purchase it on Black Friday, or Cyber Monday. You won't get it in a box from UPS or Fed Ex. But you can start the process tonight as you come to this table of grace - God's thanksgiving feast to which you are invited. A place where wine is poured out not only in sacrifice, but also as "eucharist," the joy of celebrating life together.

Nothing else is quite the same. Nothing else do we carry with us. Nothing else will mean as much as your ministry to the world that God loves. As you take this bread tonight, remember *"For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* So have an amazing Thanksgiving. Then turn each of those thanks into something that gives life to another. As you share your gratitude at Thanksgiving, let this be your prayer:

O Heavenly Father
 we thank you for food, and remember the hungry
 we thank you for health and remember the sick
 we thank you for friends and remember the friendless
 we thank you for freedom and remember the enslaved.
 May these remembrances stir us to service,
 that your gifts to us may be used for others. Amen.

Pastor Susan Langhauser
 Advent Olathe

Resources: Jeanne Phillips, reprint of her mother "Dear Abby's" prayer