

A Heavenly Diet

Sunday, August 1, 2021 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: John 6:24-35

May God's abundance always be recognized as a part of your life. May you find joy and peace knowing that Jesus offers His life and connection that in our living we may never be hungry or thirsty.

We all struggle don't we? What to eat to be healthy. What to eat or not, that maintains a good weight. Stay away from snacking and yet know there is always temptation when the tensions of the day slip into our heart and thoughts.

And there are many times when the stress and schedule of our lives making eating something we don't even think much about.

Where is that Quarter Pounder with Cheese! Where are those Nacho's or Tacos that hit the spot. Why have diet Coke when the "real thing" tastes so much better.

Maybe you are better than I? I still love Burger King Whoppers....but know from my 3 stints....they no longer can be on my diet!

And how crazy is this! I will still on occasion "indulge" in foods that should not be!

After the feeding of the 5,000 plus....

And I would add....Jesus healing and teaching....

The people are mesmerized by Jesus.

The signs of his presence and power are clear.....and the people want more!

So like puppies under the table searching for every scrap....

They go looking for this special man.

Jesus wants them to see more. Jesus wants not their stomachs to be full...but their hearts beating more in the rhythm of the love of God.

So Jesus says:

“Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me...

Not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”

Translated.....it’s easier when gratification seems to stem problems that are current...

Rather than understanding the deeper hunger and thirst that brings peace beyond food. /////

I was thinking about two passages:

FIRST is: Seek ye first the kingdom of God. From Matthew 6:25ff

You might remember that Jesus is teaching not to worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink.....

Are you not more value than all else....

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So today's Gospel as well:

Not food for the stomach....but strength for the heart....even though troubles are never completely gone. /////

How much value are you to God? Does God only care about food on the table or scraps underneath?

What is the real nature of your quest in life?

Do You remember this meal time prayer: "Come Lord Jesus be our guest....and these gifts to us be blest. By his hands we all are fed give us Lord our daily bread."

Not just a prayer for the Pizza that sits in front of you! /////

Jesus says to the people:

"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."

Do we believe that we have an "absentee" God?

That we somehow have to "run" after Jesus for the Bread that fills our stomach?

God is there in abundance for you and me.

Yes, “bread” is metaphor for bridging the promise and clinging to the promise that comes from the cross.

St. Paul makes it very clear in

Philippians 4:11ff

“I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”////

* * * I can do all things through him who strengthens me!

“Contentment” is not just a full stomach. ////

I would tell you there are two meals that I am always frustrated with:

#1 When I go to a “buffet.” I pay my money and am confronted with myriads of food to choose from.

I always have this bad idea that I should be able to eat more!

#2 Is Thanksgiving. My wife cooks a wonderful meal....Turkey; Stuffing; Cranberries; Banana Pudding; Rolls; Pumpkin Pie; Veggies...ETC.

Before I can get half-way through what I want....my stomach says....no more!

Contentment is NOT just a full stomach like the people running after Jesus.

Contentment IS knowing that we can indeed do all things through Jesus who strengthens us.....no matter what we face. /////

It is never about how much I ate....

But what I have “digested” in hope as the gift of grace, forgiveness and love that comes from the “Bread of Life.” ///

Jesus said to the crowd who ran around the lake:

“I am the bread of life...

Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Never be hungry! Never be thirsty!

It’s like that Pumpkin Pie.....maybe right after Thanksgiving Dinner....NO

But give me a few hours! YES.

It is learning the secret that we can indeed do all things through Jesus who strengthens me.

Our strength lies in being “full” of Christ. /////

So - The **SECOND** Passage is about the Samaritan Woman at the Jacob's well.

Jesus comes mid-day to Jacob's well:

John 4:7-15

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)^[a]

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.

Well Water....you **WILL** be thirsty again.

But drink of the **WATER** that I (Jesus) will give and never be thirsty.

Of course that does not mean no ice cold water!

IT is the spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

Seeking first His kingdom.

Being content in Christ does not negate daily needs.

What the people who ran after Jesus were missing....

Was/IS what many people today are missing!

Life is more than food. Life is more than clothing. Life is more than material wealth. Life is more than succeeding and being better than your neighbor.

If we believe in Jesus.....the Bread of Life.

Then you must define the “Bread of Life” for yourself! /////

As you know.....I am actually.....believe it or not “retired.”

One of the things we have done over the years.....besides providing for our children’s college education, is to work on “retirement income.”

So I want to share a story with you.....

* * * A young pastor came into brokerage firm to set up a new account.

Asked what he did for a living: “I’m a Pastor,” he said.

The young stockbroker turned a bit pale.

“Give me lawyer, a dentist, a life insurance agent, anything but a pastor”.....he seemed to be saying.

What do you say to a Pastor??

Finally, with some relief...

He thought of something:

“I read the Bible when the market’s down,” he announced triumphantly.

Now, there it is....the confusion of a blessing and a jackpot.

This broker thought he was doing the right thing.....

But the presumption was that religion's task....

Or worse, God's job....is to make his life better!

To hold him together when the market faltered, or even to turn the bears into bulls!

We do the same thing when we assume that God's role is to make the life that we have designed and planned work out smoothly.

“O God,” we say, “I have these plans. Make them work.” ////

Jesus is not a short-order cook preparing food to suit our physical needs.

He offers not the “food that perishes.”

But the “food that endures for eternal life.”

*** Bread of Life. *** Water beyond Jacob's Well.

*** Contentment because we know the secret.

Not many know this “obvious” secret.

We have all been blessed by our abundant God.

“That God is gracious and merciful and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” ///

Story: A Jewish family held in a concentration camp....were given very little food to survive. Yet they always celebrated Sabbath.

The Father needed to have a candle....so took what little lard they had and some string and made a candle.

The Son was very angry and said:
How could you do that? To waste what little lard we had to make a candle!

His father answered:

“Son, without food we can live for several days.

Without hope, we cannot live an hour. ///

The Samaritan Woman at the well,

Exclaimed - “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

She was partly right. ////

How are you and I doing? What do we understand when Jesus says: “I am the Bread of Life.” Are we directionally challenged when it comes to seeking first the Kingdom of God?

Have we learned how to be content no matter the circumstances?

Let us “work” for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man gives to you. Amen.