

Living Bread for the Hungry Soul  
Dr. Patricia L. Hunter  
Seattle First Baptist Church  
August 9, 2015

John 6: 35; 41-51

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.

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God! I would like to speak from the theme of ***Living Bread for the Hungry Soul***.

Jesus used many analogies to get the message across of who He was. People of his day understood images of farming, of herding sheep and goats, and of having a vineyard. If Jesus were talking to us he might use images of the internet, social media, and micro-brewing.

Frequently in the New Testament, Jesus shared meals with friends and strangers. A couple of weeks ago, we talked about Jesus feeding 5,000 people (plus women and children). He didn't know all those people, but he saw a need and he employed others to help meet the need of the hungry crowd.

In our passage today, Jesus said I am the Living bread. We know a few things about food and particularly about bread. Every culture has some sort of bread--white bread, wheat bread, bagel, nan, pita, tortilla, flat bread, yeast bread, unleavened bread, corn bread, and one of my favorites--buttermilk biscuits--just to name a few.

Many of us grew up in an era where there was always some type of bread served with every meal. Now a day, if we are trying to cut back on carbs and lose a few pounds, we limit the amount of bread we eat.

When tempted by Satan in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus said that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Jesus reminds us in both Matthew and the gospel of John that food is not the be all to end all. For those of us who are foodies, those are harsh words. While I hope one day to get to the point where I eat to live, right now I confess I live to eat. Somebody say Amen.

While food/ bread is critical to our **physical** survival, there is something more important for our **spiritual** survival that often gets overlooked. That is our spiritual food.

We are more than flesh and blood. We are living, breathing souls. We have breath in our bodies because God breathed, God's spirit, God's wind, God's Ruah, in each of us. Our spirit longs for communion with the Divine because that is the source of our being. When we neglect our spiritual selves, we may not immediately know what is wrong--all we know is that we are not happy--we don't feel right--we are off center. So we try all manner of things to feel better.

We try shopping, but we can't buy enough shoes, clothes, and jewelry to nourish our souls.

We try working 12-14 hour days, but being a workaholic will not get us to spiritual wholeness.

We can serve on every church committee we can find and still be spiritually famished. We can use the latest gps technology, computers gadgets, and download Windows 10 and still not reach the heart of God.

We can try all manner of addictive behavior--drugs, gambling, sex, and we still cannot quench the spiritual thirst within each of us. Too often we look for quick fixes to our spiritual conditions. Temporary fixes will not satisfy our eternal longings. Only the living God can do that. Only the Living Bread can do that.

When we are out of sorts with the Divine, our hungry souls get cranky. Just like we do when we are physically hungry. And, we take out our frustration on those closest to us--our spouse, partner, parents, neighbors, and yes even our children. We grumble and criticize others when we may just need to spend some time with Jesus.

Those with Jesus grumbled and criticized his claim to be Living Bread. They said, "who does this man think he is talking to us like this. We know his mama and his daddy. He doesn't have the right to talk to us this way". Jesus realized a prophet is without honor in his or her own home and didn't let their grumbling get to him. When you grow up among folks who are quick to say they knew you when..., those folks are frequently the last ones to accept your professional wisdom and knowledge. At some point, the

community of faith has to make room for those coming behind us and those who are new in our community. We have make way for a fresh wind of the spirit.

Those who grumbled reminded Jesus that they also knew about bread that came from heaven. They spoke of the manna their fore-parents had in the wilderness. Jesus said, yes your ancestors had manna in the wilderness and they died. Yes, God provided for them their daily physical bread. But Jesus was not referring to the bread that satisfies for the moment and then leaves us hungry in an hour.

To feast on that Living Bread calls for our intention. We have to make it happen. In some Black church traditions, we talk about going into one's prayer closet to be with God. That means, going to that special designated place, where it is just you and God. It could be at home, it could be on a mountain, by a lake, playing an instrument, or at your kitchen table. You have to determine where that sacred space is for you.

I hope that gathering among the saints of God for worship in this sanctuary, is also sacred space where you are spiritually fed Living Bread.

In our sacred spaces our spirit communes with the Divine. In our sacred spaces, our spirit is renewed, and our hearts are lifted. In our sacred spaces we are reminded of just how precious we are to God. And, in those safe, sacred spaces we dare to confess our shortcomings and ask for forgiveness. With hearts wide open, we feast on the Living Bread and our souls are satisfied. That is the Bread that will sustain us in good times and bad, in joy and in sorrow.

Our culture doesn't encourage us to be still and listen for God. We are busy with family, busy on our jobs, or busy checking our phones, texting, and photographing our food for Facebook. Yet, sometimes we have to do the radical and unplug. Yes, turn off our phones, not just put them on vibrate, but turn them off. Get off Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter--truth be told, some of us are addicted to our phones. In the quietness of those moments, as we seek the Living Bread, our hungry souls will find the nourishment we need.

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls". (Matt.11:29) Jesus is the Living Bread for the Hungry Soul.

When our souls are filled with the Living Bread, we can endure chaos all around and hold fast to the Prince of Peace. When illness starts to rack our bodies, and age takes its toll, we can sing with Tramaine Hawkins, I Never Lost My Praise. When trouble starts on the job or in your relationship, you can proclaim with the psalmist, the Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear the Lord is the strength of my life of who shall I be afraid. Jesus offers us Living Bread that will sustain us through this life and into eternity. Take, eat, and be filled.

If you are here today and would like to deepen your relationship with Jesus and join this faith community, we invite you to come forward while we sing our closing hymn, Glorious Things of You are Spoken.