

## "We Are Not Ourselves When We Are Hungry"

Exodus 16:2–4, 9–15

John 6:24–35

This Sunday we continue our journey through John chapter 6. Last week was John's version of the feeding of the five thousand and this week that story continues, with the crowds hungry for more and Jesus challenging them (and us!) to move beyond the marvelous meal on the hillside to the even more marvelous "bread of life."

This story mirrors the story of Jesus and the woman at the well, John chapter 4. The woman asks for water and Jesus responds that there is more deeply nourishing water: "living water." Here the crowds ask for more bread, and Jesus responds there is more nourishing lasting bread: "the bread of life." The people are hungry and the people are looking for a sign, but Jesus wants them to move beyond too narrowly focusing on "signs" and food and broaden their perspective into wider, deeper trust in God.

The crowds are anxious, desperate, and skeptical. They are still hung up on "signs and wonders." "What sign will you give us," they ask, "so we can trust you?" No matter how many wonders we may see, we will always ask for one more. In fact, the more wondrous the wonder, the more we will be tempted to request an encore, one more hit, just to be sure.

In the background there is the Exodus story, and in particular, the story of the Israelites, Moses, and the manna in the wilderness. Jesus wants to correct the crowds' misunderstandings of a) that Moses gave the Israelites the manna (on the contrary, God gave it to them), and b) that the crowds lack a convincing sign, such as the ancient "bread from heaven" (on the contrary, Jesus himself is the sign—the bread).

The crowd is focused on astounding physical wonders. Physical food has its place, but there's another kind of nourishment even more essential to our wellbeing.

Like the Snickers® advertisement says, "We are not ourselves when we are hungry." We get cranky when we do not have physical food, and we are not the people God created us to be when we are hungry for control, power, protection against being vulnerable, and we trust only in ourselves.

When we think we know better than God, we are not ourselves and get cranky. God acknowledges the Israelites' need for food in the wilderness, but God also desires to shape them as a different type of people, a different type of community. In the ritual practice of daily gathering of food, they will learn that their very bodies have to trust God during their wilderness experience. They will learn there is enough for their needs and for everyone else as well. And their hunger will be satisfied.

In the same way Jesus knew the crowds and our nature all too well. Jesus knew we want easy food and resist going in directions that lead to discomfort and uncertainty. Jesus knew we regularly reject those paths that seem difficult or disturbing, and we ignore the signs of God's presence in front of us. That we act out of fear more than trust.

Jesus says my life, my teachings, my love; my grace is bread from heaven, the bread of God, the bread of life! The bread we are to give thanks for and divide up and share with the world.

Think about it – Pray about it – Live it

*Bob*