

**I speak with you this morning in the Name of God, our Creator; Jesus, our Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, our Comforter. Amen**

**Please be seated.**

**This is week three of the Bread of Life saga in John's gospel. And I don't think any of us are looking forward to me speaking about bread for yet another sermon. Well, I thought we might change things up today and instead of attempting to make sense of Jesus' comments about eating his flesh, and the Jews trying to understand how Jesus could make such proclamations about himself. So I thought we could share some thoughts about what this "bread of life" discourse is all about. So, here we go.**

**I have taken the theme for my sermon from the work of several contributors to Working Preacher.com, a website dedicated to helping clergy and lay preachers who are charged with interpreting what the Scriptures are leading us to understand, and what the Scriptures are saying for Christians living in this present time. I want to be clear here. What we interpret the Scriptures to be saying for our time may well be different than what those same Scriptures were interpreted as saying even fifty years ago. One thing is certain, as time moves on, only God our Creator remains unchanged – our situation in life may change for the better, or for worse, but God is still the One who blesses humankind, and for that matter, all creation. And God knows our every need. God loves us unconditionally when we decide to be children of the Most High; and God is the Divine One who will never turn away from God's people.**

**The "Bread of life" theme is the heart of the sixth chapter of John's gospel. This chapter contains multiple points in which the hearer has opportunity to inwardly digest what Scripture tells us we ought to be doing. What I wish to offer for your consideration, is what I understand from the commentaries, written by various theologians, to be saying about how we might interpret the Scripture for today.**

**The first point is this: And we will call this point - Essential nourishment:**

**"Jesus offers Himself as the source of everlasting life, [and here is] addressing the deepest spiritual hunger of humanity". Let me repeat that - Jesus offers Himself as the source of everlasting life, addressing the deepest spiritual hunger of humanity. That's it – Jesus is the source of everything we need, if we wish to gain the gift of eternal life, the gift God has so freely given to anyone who hears God's call and responds by accepting God's grace and blessing into our lives. If you remember back to what I said two weeks ago, we didn't call God to join into our journey. Just the opposite - God was the one who has called us to be children of the kingdom. And it is Jesus who has shown us the path to be children of the Creator. It is**

through sharing the bread and wine that we receive the spiritual nourishment we need to be children of our God and Creator. And this we do, as we remember who Jesus is.

The second point is this: **Redemption:** Just as God provides the nourishment we require to be children of God's kingdom, Jesus provides a path to redemption for all humankind. And the path is through His sacrifice. Think about for a moment. Had Jesus not come to dwell among us and given up his life as one full and complete offering for the atonement of all the sin of all humankind throughout all human history, there would not have been a redemptive act and we would not be here worshipping together today. Without Jesus, there would be no Christian way. Without Jesus, Christianity, as we know it, what not exist.

Thirdly: **We have God's gift of life-sustaining provision:** Throughout the Bible, bread has symbolized God's provision for all our needs. And Jesus is the true source of spiritual life. When you stop and think for a moment, where in life does Holy Scripture provide us with lessons of bread becoming the sign of God's bounteous goodness being shared with humankind? In the Book of Exodus, as the Israelites prepare to leave the life of enslavement they have known in Egypt, they prepare a Passover meal of lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. It is consumed hastily and nothing is left behind. The people of the Jewish tradition memorialize this sacrifice and the gift of freedom and deliverance, in the Seder meal they share. Later, as the Israelites crossed the wilderness in search for the land promised to Moses, their food supplies failed and they turned to the Creator for life saving nourishment. And what does God do? God provides for their needs by covering the ground with manna – bread from heaven. And then, later in the Scriptures, in fact in all four of the gospel stories, Jesus is described as the source of life-sustaining nourishment in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. And again, at the last supper, when Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to his companions to share, Jesus commands his followers, and by extension he is also commanding us to remember Him each time any of us gather to share in the memory of His wonderful gift of redemption for all humankind.

And then, the fourth thought is this: **The Divine nature of our Saviour:** Jesus' claim to be the "Bread of Life" alludes back to the miraculous manna in the wilderness which I spoke of a moment ago. And through the words we have been hearing over the past weeks from chapter six of John's gospel, Scripture emphasizes Jesus' mission is to save humanity from sin and evil. It is Jesus who is the source of the life-saving nourishment we require for eternal happiness. It is this same Jesus, who shared his life, his message, his mission, his death and his resurrection so we might be benefactors of the gift of life eternal. And it is Jesus whom we remember as we break bread in the Eucharist celebration, whether that is here at All Saints, in our homes at mealtime, or in any setting where two or three are gathered together in God's name.

Over the past nine months or so, you have heard me speak of Jesus as being both human and divine at the same time. You see, no other member of our humankind has ever, nor will ever be able to achieve to Oneness with the Creator. Only God can be God.

And finally, number five - Believe in Jesus: Feeding on Jesus means accepting Him as the Holy One sent from the Creator. And we feed on Jesus by trusting His word. Last week, I shared with you some thoughts about what Jesus is asking us to do at the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup. For those who may not have been with us last week, the words we say at the blessing of the bread and the cup, and the words we use to honour Jesus' act, are these - , "On the night before Jesus died, he feasted with his companions. He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this to remember me." And then Scripture adds this statement:

After supper, he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to his companions saying: "Drink this, all of you; this is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and the world for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this to remember me." "Do this to remember me"

Do this to remember me. That's it, break bread, share it with one another, bless the cup and share it, but always , always do these things because, as Christians, we do so to remember the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Divine One who came to redeem us from all the wrongs ever committed and all the evil yet to be done by humankind.

When we feed on Jesus, our spiritual well-being is blessed by the Creator's grace and love. And we are empowered to go into the world to do likewise – to bless all God's creation and to be Christ's own in this troubled time.

Two weeks ago, I shared with you the mantra I learned during my days studying as an Anglican at Lutheran Seminary at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo Ontario. It goes something like this – "Salvation by the grace of God through faith in the gift of redemption given to us through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Saviour, Jesus Christ". There you have it. The five things we need to have life eternal and to have it abundantly -

- 1) be nourished through the Word of God as given to us in the Holy Scripture
- 2) Jesus came to us to be the redemption for all the transgressions and evil which has gone before, which are happening now, and which are yet to be

- 3) **God will provide for our well-being. God will never turn from us. And when we turn away from God, God will always accept anyone who turns back to the Creator. That is God's promise for all humankind.**
- 4) **And remember this, Jesus is God. And the Holy Spirit is God working in the world right now, no matter how back things may seem to be.**
- 5) **And finally, Believe. Believe that you are a child of the Most High. Believe and you shall be saved. Scripture tells us God has deemed this to be the truth.**

**Amen.**