

## " Perfect Food for the Journey"

Texts: 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33

Ephesians 4:25-5:2 (Series B, 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost) Ps. 130

John 6:35, 41-51

Let us Pray –

O God of light bless the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts.

Breath into us that we may live in the manner you have appointed unto us.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen

For the past four Sunday the theme has been around Bread: We heard how Jesus fed five thousand men with five loaf of bread and two fish, followed by Jesus say he is the Bread that came from heaven to satisfy our spirit, soul, and body. Today, Jesus continues to says: *This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.*

The Story of Elijah is an interesting one -- he was one of the first of the great prophets, a prophet to the nation of the Northern Israel. Like us, Elijah is on a journey - a journey of the Spirit -- a journey that has led him to a confrontation with the priests of Baal - the god of Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab.

On that journey Elijah has earned the hatred of Jezebel - which, given her "*charming personality*" was a very easy thing to earn – and she wishes him dead - and so he flees from the city of Jezreel to Beersheba - and then – he goes out into the wilderness about a day's walk, and came to a solitary broom tree in the midst of this wilderness, and sits under - and asks God that he might die.

There are times, are there not, when people we know and love despair to the point of wanting to die. Perhaps there have been times when we ourselves have thought death a sweet alternative,

- an alternative - as it was to Elijah - to being a solitary voice -
- an alternative to the stress of being under attack from those who were once our neighbours,

- an alternative to the loneliness and fear of being the odd person out, the person who has done what was right only to find that all who have stood with him or her have vanished away - and every hand seems set against you

- an alternative to feeling that perhaps - just perhaps - you are no better - and perhaps even worse than those who have gone before you – no better even than those who are against us.

Our journey through life takes us through some very dangerous country our pilgrimage can lead us into some very desolate wilderness.. And so Elijah prays that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."

And then he lies down under the broom tree and falls asleep,  
a sleep that I know that each one of you here today understands -

- the sleep of exhaustion,

- the sleep of stress so high and the energy to go on fighting so low

that it sweeps over you - and normally is too soon gone - the new day comes too quickly.

And in the night - something happens. Some answer to his prayer.

An angel comes and touches him - wakens him - and tells him to "get up and eat". And there is food - a Cake of Bread upon a hot stone - and drink - a jar of water set near to hand.

And he eats and he lies down again, till again - some time later - the angel returns and touches him once more, and says:

"Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you."

And he rises, and he eats and he drinks - and then, the scriptures say, he went forty days and forty nights to Horeb - the mountain of God - the place we call Mount Sinai - and there he comes to cave and spends the night there.

Other interesting things happen to Elijah while he is at the Mountain of God. At the end of this journey through the wilderness he is granted a vision of God - and given a message of hope for his own life and for the nation - and he is given a disciple - one who will keep him company and help him on his journey - and at last take his place as prophet over Israel when he grows old - the young man Elisha. But, with me, think of the words of the angel to Elijah, the words "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you."

To survive on our journey, to have the strength to go through the barren places of life, those places where we are alone - because of divorce, or illness, or death - we need to eat to drink the food and the drink that God has prepared for us: the food that he grants each one of us in the sacred stories of this holy book and in the newer tales told by people of faith who enter our lives from time to time.

We need to cry out to God when we are in need, when we are in despair, and then heed the tap that comes upon our shoulder in the middle of the night - the voice that whispers in our inward most ear - and tells us to believe, to trust, to rise up and take the bread and the water that will be there for us and to eat and drink - and to eat and drink again -- and go forth to complete our journey.

Are you running on empty? Do you sometimes feel that you do not have the strength to travel onward for another day? let alone another 40? Perhaps it is time to eat. The food is all round us - especially in this place - and in the people who sit beside you - people who have faith - people who know the story and who know where God is to be found.

God is here - God's angels hover round us. God is here - in the truth that we proclaim

- in the bread that has been passed around this sanctuary - in the light that enters through the windows

- in the water that flows in the rivers outside these doors
- in the ordinary things - the daily miracles that so many take for granted -
  - the rising and setting of the sun, and the moon and the stars, and the ever changing mountains and the rhythm of the seasons
- in the breath that comes in and out of our lungs each minute
- in the crying of a baby and the laughter of a child and the care of a lover.

God is here in the Christ, the son of Joseph - whose parents indeed we do know; in Jesus, the carpenter with whom we are well familiar -

God is in the one who says:

*"I am the bread of life" and again "I am the living bread that came down from heaven - whoever eats of this bread will live forever."*

God is in the one who said to his disciples and to us:

*"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Solid food is available my friends, food that will sustain us on our spiritual journey. It is a great tragedy not to take it up and eat it - a tragedy that can so easily be avoided if one but takes the time to look around, and to think about what will truly satisfy.

God speaks to every individual through what happens to them moment by moment. The events of each moment are stamped with the will of God.... we find all that is necessary in the present moment.

Again: We are bored with the small happenings around us, yet it is these trivialities - as we consider them - which would do marvels for us if only we did not despise them.

Bread - ordinary bread -- bread simply for the eating.

Rich and filling - something we know well - something that endures when other more exotic foods are not available, or proves - as so much of the food that we eat in this society does - to lead to death instead of life.

Ordinary stuff. Stuff we know. Stuff that is so familiar to us that many of us fail to understand it - and either try to make it out to be more than it is - or despise it for being less than they think it ought to be, for being ordinary - familiar - common:

rather than powerful, immaculate, glorious, and wondrous beyond our understanding.

But the ordinary is powerful, - it is immaculate and glorious and wondrous, for those who have the eyes to see - those who seek God - and are willing to get up and eat and drink what God has provided. God has provided us with food for our journey - take and eat that you may be strong in him and so reach the place he is calling you to.

Janet Cawley penned this hymn:

God of the way, you are the road we travel, and the sign we follow; you are bread for the journey, and the wine of arrival.

Guide us as we follow in your way, holding on to each other, reaching out to your beloved world.

And when we stray, seek us out and find us, set our feet on the path again, and lead us safely home. In the name of Jesus, our Companion we pray.

Jesus tells us no fewer than six times in this Gospel reading that he is our salvation, our bread of eternal life ~ do we hear it, do we know it, do we believe it yet? If we eat of this bread, that is, if we live into the calling of Christ by faith, we are already given eternal life. Easy? Well, not at all, but as we frequently falter along the way, our faith, even if very weak at times, will lift us back to the path.

Faith, to me, is the connection among these pieces. Faith to journey toward the unknown, to call out to God in distress, to transform our anger into kindness and forgiveness. Our faith in Jesus, the Bread of Life, is truly the perfect food for our journey to eternity.

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

**Prayer concerns:** Dear Lord, we spoken and thought much about bread this morning- the bread that you give that is worked upon by human hands -- and the bread of heaven - the bread of life - that you have given us in and through Christ Jesus. We thank you Lord for your love - for how you provide all things that we need. We thank you - and we ask you, O God, to continue to feed us - to work on us - and to move us to feed others.

Help us to live the recipe of good deeds before we give the recipe to others. Give us the kneading strength of your Spirit to work your words into the doughy recesses of our lives. Help us to let it rest awhile in our hearts so that it can rise.

Help us not to fear the oven of life, so that it can bake through and through. And grant that in the baking, the world would be able to roll down its window and savour the aroma of freshly baked bread, your bread of life. Lord, hear our prayer... **Amen.**

**Prayer concerns:** *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Wess Bourgaize, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Ellen Eriksen, the floods in Europe, China, India and wild fires in parts of Canada and the USA & Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers.*

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

- **Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness # 488**
- **Just As I Am, without One Plea # 592**
- **The Church's one Foundation # 654**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

August 8, 2021