July 10, 2020 Devotional

Let us ponder Jesus’ words:

*“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”* John 6:35

We are celebrating the sacrament of Communion, the Lord’s Supper, this coming Sunday. I want to think with you about the meaning of communion in light of Jesus’ words, in which he uses a metaphor, to declare that he is the bread of life. What does Jesus mean when he says he is the bread of life?

There is nothing quite like the smell of freshly baked bread. It still tantalizes our taste buds today. In the Middle East, in Jesus’ day, bread was a necessity. Bread was not something served occasionally at a meal. It was not something extra to enhance the main dish. It was the heart of every meal. Bread was a staple. In Jesus’ day, you didn’t use a fork to pick up your food. You scooped up the food on your plate with bread.

The crowd knew what Jesus meant when he said to them, “I am the bread of life.” Bread was something not only familiar, but basic to their life. They knew he was making a bold claim. Jesus was saying that he was the staff of life, the sum and substance of life, the essence of life. He was saying the way that you find true life, authentic life, is through him.

Jesus spoke about bread at other times in his teaching. When Jesus was in the wilderness, before he began his ministry, he was tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread. Jesus said: “*Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”*

Jesus obviously knew people needed bread to satisfy their physical hunger. He said that people do not live by bread alone, but he didn’t say people live without bread. Bread was indispensable.

Jesus was asserting a radical notion to the crowd; he himself was bread. He was bread for the human soul. He was food for the human spirit. He was sustenance for the essence of humanity. Jesus was declaring that knowing him would sustain human spiritual hunger, which is a fundamental aspect of what it means to be human. Jesus’ satisfies our spiritual life, when we enter into a relationship with him

Biblically, we know that we are more than physical beings. There is more to us than flesh and blood. To be human is also to be a spiritual being. Why, because we are made in the image of God. Scripture tells us that God is a Spirit and worshippers must worship God in spirit and in truth, John 4:24. As persons created in God’s image, we are also spiritual beings. We have a spiritual life. We experience spiritual hunger. God has created us with a spiritual need. God has made us dependent upon him spiritually, so that His Spirit can connect with our spirit. Out of love, God desires to meet our spiritual need, so that God alone, will be the center of our lives and not ourselves. When God is at the center of our lives, we are most fully human.

God knows that only a relationship with him can sustain this inward spiritual hunger. It is when our spirit encounters God’s Spirit that we are living the life God created us to live. We are then in a right relationship with God. We are no longer separated from God. It is then that we are living an authentic, whole, and integrated life.

Humans too often try to fill their spiritual need through materialism. We sense an inner void and seek to fill it by buying and accumulating things. It works for a short time. But soon the thrill wears off. And that inner desire, that inward void, that inward need, that inner restlessness of our heart, like Augustine said, springs forth once again. And our spiritual hunger again goes unsatisfied.

Jesus makes an astounding claim. He says that he is the true bread, the true bread from heaven. Jesus says: “*For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

This means that Jesus does not only sustain or satisfy our spiritual hunger, our spiritual need on earth, but that he is spiritual bread for our eternal life. He is the living bread that came down from heaven. Earthy bread sustains our physical hunger temporarily. Jesus is the bread which sustains our spiritual hunger forever. Jesus says: “*I am the living bread that came down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.”*

Jesus is the bread of life for today. A relationship with God in Christ gives meaning, hope and a sense of purpose for our earthly existence. But beyond this, Jesus is the bread of life for the life to come, that is, for eternity. Sunday is the Lord’s Supper. May you find sustenance in this bread today and forever.

The grace of the Lord be with you,

Rev. Alan W. Deuel