

Bread of Life

Summer Gospels – Jesus talking much about bread
Presented by The Rev. N. Dean Evans on Sunday, August 2, 2015

We heard the story of the feeding of the 5,000. And, today's gospel reminds us that God fed the Israelites with manna or bread from heaven as they wandered the wilderness of Sinai. We know that bread is a staple – it and other basic foods sustain life. Without them we would die. But they don't last. We eat today and are hungry tomorrow. Jesus cautions us in this gospel not to depend on the bread that doesn't last. And He's talking about much more than the food we eat. In this affluent society where you and I live, we avidly pursue the bread that doesn't last. Spurred on by the newest inventions, incessant advertising, and the human tendency to always want more than we now have, we drive ourselves to acquire the marks of success – as much money as we can make, more and more material goods – the latest smart phone, Windows 10, a higher resolution TV, the newest of everything. The last one never seems good enough. Think about it! How long are we satisfied with a new acquisition, whatever it is? No matter what we acquire we hunger for more.

A popular singer in my generation – Peggy Lee – one song – as she reached various goals in life, the mournful refrain – “Is that all there is?” whether a Christmas toy, a new bicycle, a new dress – they might provide momentary pleasure, and maybe a sense of fulfillment – but there was always the hunger for more – and the refrain – “Is that all there is?”

Well, my friends, it isn't. The indefinable hunger that still exists after our physical and material needs have been met is spiritual hunger – the search for love, for truth, for peace – for real fulfillment in life.

And Jesus recognizes our deepest needs in this gospel when he tells us, “Don't work for the food that doesn't last, but for that which endures for eternal Life.” And what is this imperishable food? We listen to Jesus' words again – “I am the bread of life, the living bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” So Jesus offers to satisfy our spiritual hunger by offering Himself as the living bread that lasts forever.

So how do we accept this offer if we really want it? First, we need to believe in Jesus and truly welcome him into our life. It's as simple as that. Our real hunger ends only when we come to know Jesus as our personal savior and friend. Without Him we can exist and enjoy life to some extent, but not life in all its potential. In my life I tried for years to make it on my own, but there was always these haunting questions – “Is that all there is? Where do I find true fulfillment in life?” And I found it only when I came to know Jesus – the living bread – and accepted Him as my redeemer and friend. Since that time many years ago I have experienced peace, acceptance of myself, and fulfillment in life that I had never known before.

And now we come at this very hour to meet him in the wonderful sacrament of the Holy Communion where we hear His voice again – “This is my body which is given for you.” And as we receive the bread of life once again, we can experience the real presence of Jesus in our lives. And I pray that he may continue to be yours – the living bread – today, tomorrow and forever.