

“God’s Bread Sticks with Us”
Sermon by Lisa Crismore
August 1, 2021 – John Knox Presbyterian Church

John 6:24-35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for **the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.** For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?” Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

This week’s email from Richard Hoerger from the Storehouse just down the road and who we support their food pantry writes that the new Aldi in Founders Square is still having trouble getting the bread orders under control. And since they are a partner to receive donations, they have been moving more bread around than you would believe.

He says, “Each of our client families tonight received 4 bread products each. White bread, wheat bread, hamburger buns and hot dog buns. We took 320 loaves of bread to Wheeler Mission today. Yesterday we took 180 packages of buns to Wheeler. In the last two weeks we have shared 132 trays of bread with Lynhurst Baptist Church Community Center. That is approximately 1,584 bread products for facility alone.

A big thank you to Dan and Linda Bourne (John Knox peeps 😊) who coordinate these pickups for us. When Dan calls and asked me to bring the pantry trailer I know it’s going to be crazy.”

This sounds very much like the scripture that Rev. George LeMaster preached on last Sunday. One would say that if the packages were opened and distributed it could possibly be more than the feeding of the five thousand. We can visualize our own Dan Bourne pulling up with a trailer as one of Jesus’ disciples and along with the others passing it out to the crowd after Jesus has blessed it!

Our scripture today picks up after the people have witnessed a miracle. This great big group of people have been fed this meal. It was a sign that Jesus was very special. They want more from this man, who seems to have slipped away from them.

Jesus has retreated for some time in prayer and meditation. Then, he meets up with his disciples as he walks to them on the water and joins them in the boat. As they return to shore, this is where the people find him.

It appears Jesus is a bit annoyed with them because the reason they want to see him is not because he is from God. They want the miracle. They want the magic trick of free bread! We hear it when Jesus says, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for **the food**

that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.”

The people do hear him and begin to ask about what kind of work do they have to do for this food that lasts forever. Jesus simply says that you need to believe that I am the one sent by God. Simply believe! That is so hard!

The people are wanting to know how it works. Show us this so that we will have proof and believe. We remember when Moses gave our ancestors manna from heaven to sustain them during their forty years in the wilderness. Jesus comes quickly to clarify. No! The manna from heaven is the same bread that you speak of Jesus was not Moses doing but a gift from God. It is God that gives you life giving bread. This bread will fill you up and never leave you.

This is like a divine symphony for their ears as they ask to receive this bread not just for today but every day of their lives. They want it always, forever! Jesus says I am from God. I am the bread of life. Believe in me and you will never be hungry or thirst again.

How often do we think about Jesus being our daily bread? Jesus feeding and sustaining us? We can get so caught up in the day to day demands of life – paying bills, taking care of loved ones, keeping up with doctor appointments, waiting to hear about test results.

Not to mention this Covid thing that has us all scratching our heads. Numbers of cases are creeping up ranking counties in the yellow and orange categories. We hear the need for us to be vaccinated and yet our state is right at about 50-53%. We know it is a choice and we find it difficult to respect this. We will share in our prayer concerns that Amy Winton’s father in-law died at around 12:30 – early Saturday morning from Covid. We will also hear that Willy Almodovar’s father in-law and J. Stanley have come down with Covid. We are exhausted and yet this virus continues to hang-on and wreak havoc.

Last week, George LeMaster asked us if we were hungry. He hoped and urged us to always be wanting that life giving sustenance, Jesus – the Bread of Life! Today, we celebrate communion. We eat the bread, remembering the life giving grace that Jesus gives to us. When we eat the bread and taste it, **do we think about Jesus being present with us?** Jesus being with us, giving us strength and renewal to face whatever lies ahead of us. What would it be like to never experience this meal again? Would we starve spiritually? Thank the Lord, Jesus promises that this bread never runs out and is free to all who are willing to receive it.

Jill Duffield also asks, **“What is life-giving for you? How do you experience Jesus in those life-giving moments?”** (Lent in Plain Sight by Jill J. Duffield; Westminster John Knox Press; 2020; p. 35)

For me, I look at the world around me and try to see Jesus at work. I always enjoy watching the Olympics. But, this time is especially joy filled. It is amazing to see these athletes, who have put their lives on hold for a year to wait out Covid. To see their hard-work and sacrifice come to fruition is amazing. Even when they don’t achieve the right color of medal or even reach medal status, they are congratulating other nations and their achievements because they know what it took to get there.

And then the spotlight that has been put on Simone Biles, who has struggled with mental health issues has been incredible. Her teammates, who have given her grace and support throughout this week, have modelled for us all on how we should treat others going through this invisible disease. It has had to be gut wrenching for Simone to cheer her dear friends on from the sidelines but she has done it with strength and grace as well.

From our own church, I got word from Patty McKinnon that the Enow family has celebrated two successes. The father, Peter, has been promoted to staff sergeant in the Army and the mother, Laura, received her US citizenship. For those of you, who are new to our congregation or visiting, the Enows came to the United States from Cameroon in February of 2016. They had to organize all their assets in Africa and leave all that was familiar to them to come to this country. They left behind college degree positions to seek a better place in America. This family has persevered through tremendous challenges.

It is stories like these where I see Christ's life giving bread. Christ's presence is with us. Always!

Prayer –

Jesus, bread of life, you sustain us through seasons when we fail to feel your presence. You nourish us when we fear we cannot keep going. You feed us when we are hungry for purpose, hope and healing. You assure us that when we believe in you, we will never hunger or thirst again. You promise us that you will never abandon us. Therefore, we ask: Just give us yourself and we will be satisfied. Amen. (Lent in Plain Sight by Jill J. Duffield; Westminster John Knox Press; 2020; p. 35)