

## **Eat and Be Satisfied**

By: Meagan McLaughlin

August 1, 2021. What are you hungry for today, physically, spiritually, emotionally? What abundance do you have, that can be shared with the community and the world around you? Ask for what you need. Eat until you are full.

Readings: [Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15](#), [Ephesians 4:1-16](#), [John 6:24-35](#)

\*\*\* Transcript \*\*\*

Several times a week, the church phone or the doorbell rings and a community member asks the question, “I am hungry. My kids are hungry. Can I get a food card?” I can’t imagine being that hungry, not having food for my next meal, and the level of desperation, shame, and even despair of finding myself in that situation, with no way out. “I am hungry. My kids are hungry.”

The Israelites came to Moses and Aaron with that same request. Actually, it says in our reading from Exodus today that they complained, saying that they might have been slaves in Egypt, but at least they had enough to eat. At least they weren’t hungry. For the Israelites, as they sat in the desert, slavery looked preferable to hunger. And they let Moses and Aaron — and God — know it.

We are halfway through five weeks of hearing from the Gospel of John about bread, hunger, life, eating, five weeks of reflecting on what is often referred to as the “bread of life discourse.” What stands out about this week is that Jesus doesn’t actually feed people in today’s gospel reading — although he certainly talks about bread, and hunger, a lot. This particular reading can seem to discount the significance of physical bread, to suggest that those who are hungry should rely on faith in God alone to ease their hunger, until we remember that the people Jesus was speaking to had just come from eating their fill of the loaves and fishes that Jesus offered to their crowd. Eating their fill, and then some. Their bellies were already full. Knowing that, Jesus invites them to think deeper.

I have never not known how I would get food for my next meal. In fact, usually my biggest challenge around food is deciding from among the many options available to me, and whether to eat something on the healthy side, or indulge myself in some kind of treat. But I have at rare times looked up from what I was doing to see that it is 2pm and I haven’t had lunch yet, or gotten caught up in an activity or errands that carried me past regular meal time, and suddenly I’m hungry.

You know the feeling — a little weak, a little irritable, a little less capable of thinking clearly or making decisions. My sister-in-law calls it “hangry,” hungry-angry. When have you been really hungry, or perhaps even “hangry?” What did that feel like? How did your body feel? What was your thinking like? How did it feel when you did get something to eat? We have among us people who have studied the connections between food insecurity, hunger, and family stress and even violence, naming the reality that not having necessary food can lead to tension and even abuse. And schools have long recognized that if kids haven’t eaten breakfast, they can’t learn.

From these five weeks of readings about bread we know that God understands hunger. And God feeds God’s people — all of them. Last week, Jesus invited all of the over 5,000 people to sit down together, so they could eat and be satisfied, and Elijah did the same with the people of his community. Today, we hear how God provided manna and quail in the desert for the Israelites.

And now, knowing they have had their fill, Jesus and the people talk about how they were hungry and were fed. “Moses fed the people manna,” they say. And Jesus reminds them that the manna came from God, not from Moses. The manna came from God.

Luther highlights this in his Small Catechism explanation of the Lord’s Prayer when he begins by saying that we don’t ask God to give us our daily bread so that God will give it to us, like some kind of reward, but so that we know God has already given us everything we need for our lives, and receive it with thanksgiving. And it is not just bread, says Luther, but food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, and the like. Anyone remember that from the catechism?

Everything we have — everything — comes from God. And when God provides the manna, and Jesus feeds the over 5,000, everyone has what they need. The Israelites are specifically told to gather and eat what they need for the day, no more, and the crowds gathered around Jesus give back the abundance once they are satisfied. No hoarding or holding back. Everyone has what they need and are satisfied.

Your council has discerned two primary calls for our community of faith: welcome and serve. When the Christian Service Committee met a couple of months ago and reflected on these two calls, they decided that in order to live this out in Christian service, they will choose a few ministries that are doing this well, and build partnerships that will allow us to enter into their ministry in many different ways.

And for 2022, they will be seeking to partner with ministries that focus on hunger in our community. Welcome and serve, and as God so often does, start by offering food to those who are hungry. God has provided all that we need so that everyone, not just a few, will be satisfied.

Jesus tells the people, now that their bellies are full, that what God provides for us goes far beyond physical food. He knows their hunger, our hunger, is deeper than that. We hunger for belonging, with God and God’s people. We long for healing and forgiveness, for the ways in which we have been wounded, and for the ways in which we have wounded others. We crave connection with the earth and all that God has created. And we thirst for the peace of God that goes far beyond what this world, with all of its beauty and brokenness, can give.

As Paul writes to the Ephesians, we all also have gifts to share that are given to us to help ensure that God’s abundance, meant for all, is shared with all of God’s people. It is in community that God’s grace, mercy, forgiveness, creativity, love, and bread are available for everyone, and all are fed and satisfied.

We are so fortunate to have with us Charlie, who will be baptized at Bethany Lutheran Church later today, and her family. The water and the words of baptism remind us of the truth of Jesus’ words as we have heard them today: God feeds God’s people, providing us with the physical bread our bodies need, and all of the things our spirits need for abundant life. The celebration of baptism teaches us that we are deeply connected to these promises of God, and to the community of all of God’s beloved creation that shares in this abundance together.

“I am hungry. My kids are hungry.” What are you hungry for today, physically, spiritually, emotionally? What abundance do you have, that can be shared with the community and the world around you? Ask for what you need. Eat until you are full. Welcome and serve joyfully, knowing that God provides enough for all to be satisfied, and then some.

Thanks be to God.

**\*\*\* Keywords \*\*\***

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