

Trusting in the God Who Longs to Feed Us

By: Meagan McLaughlin

August 15, 2021. In her sermon today, Pastor Meagan brings us right to the heart of Jesus' message in the Bread of Life Discourse. In giving us God's self, Jesus tells us, what God is trying to do is provide us with nothing less than life itself.

Readings: [Proverbs 9:1-6](#), [John 6:51-58](#)

*** Transcript ***

When I was young, I was a very picky eater. Family lore says the only things that I would eat were French toast, bacon, and peas — not cookies, not ice cream, not hamburgers, not popcorn. Nothing else appealed to me, just French toast, bacon, and peas. As I was the first child, and my mom's angst was already high, my lack of eating became such a big focus that not just my parents but my younger brother all got into it, and one of my brother's early words, spoken from his highchair with his finger pointed at me, was "Eat! Eat! Eat!" I can only imagine how stressful it must have felt for my mom as she struggled to find things that I would eat and tried to make sure that I got enough to eat, day after day.

We have had a little bit of a taste of this in our house lately as we closely watch our elder kitty Gracie, who has always been a finicky grazer and has only become more picky as she's gotten older. We have found ourselves spending time every day figuring out if she wants her "special" wet food, dry food, or perhaps kitten wet food, which has been a big hit in our house lately. We encourage her to eat frequently, and not to mention keeping her sneaky brother from slipping around her tiny body to help himself to her food.

Today, four weeks into this Bread of Life Discourse, Jesus is once more inviting his followers, all of us, to eat. And more so than the last few weeks, Jesus shares with us the intimacy of what he is doing. Jesus is offering bread and drink to us who are hungry, but there is more to it than that. In today's gospel Jesus makes it clear that in Christ, God is offering God's very self to us, in a very intimate way.

And so today, with one more week to go on the Bread of Life Discourse, after several weeks of leading us closer and closer, Jesus brings us right to the heart of the message. "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life." In giving us God's self, Jesus tells us, what God is trying to do is provide us with nothing less than life itself.

Often, I think, we read these words as law. This is one of those passages that, unfortunately, can be used to draw the line between who has met God's requirements for salvation and who has not, who will receive the gift of life and who won't. However, after so many weeks of witnessing God's wildly extravagant abundance, the invitation to share in what God has created is extended to everyone. The promise that God provides what we need has been presented in so many ways, even when those receiving feel so thoroughly undeserving. It seems like reading this passage as law might miss the point.

What if we read these words as gospel, instead? What if we hear these words of Jesus as the plea of a mother wanting, perhaps even longing, to feed her child? What if, instead of requirement and limitation, we hear in Jesus' words the voice of a loving parent saying to us, "Come, let me feed you."

What if we understand that in these words God is offering not just a meal, but God's very self, everything — food, drink, breath, guidance, rest, love, forgiveness, creative energy, life?

Each week, as we worship, we hear the words of promise in our scriptures, leading us on the path of life. We gather as God's people to acknowledge that we need God. We hear and respond to Jesus' words calling us to God's table. And as we celebrate Holy Communion, we receive into our bodies, spirits, our very selves, the God who gives us not just any food, but the bread of life that only God can give.

God gives us life, even when we don't fully understand it. (Spoiler alert: next week we'll find out that the disciples don't get it either!). Even when we think we don't deserve it, even — and especially — when we are exhausted and empty and don't know what we need or how to find it, God provides life. Just like my mom longed to feed me the food she knew would give me life and help me grow, just like Karen and I commit ourselves to feeding Gracie.

God meets us where we are and gives us life, and we're transformed from the inside out. Like the young boy with the loaves and fish, we know that God has given us everything and we have more than enough to share. Like Elijah at his lowest point, when we are exhausted we know that it's okay to turn to God, rest and eat, and then continue the journey. Like the disciples, we can trust that it's okay for us not to understand. We can see that our God sticks with us, and never gives up on us, even when we might feel like giving up on God.

So if you are feeling exhausted today, if you are overwhelmed and not sure what the next step should be, or feeling like you have nothing left to give, hear the words of the God who gives their very self to provide everything you need. Jesus told his disciples, and tells all of us today, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life." We can trust in the God whose deepest longing is to feed us.

Thanks be to God.

*** Keywords ***

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