

First Trinity Lutheran Church
August 12, 2012
Text: John 6:35, 41-51

The Taste of Bread

Pepperidge Farm makes bread that comes frozen in a package and when you bake it in the oven they are delicious when served hot with butter. Just about everyone loves freshly baked bread especially when it is still warm and soft. There just is not much else that tastes better than good fresh bread. I know that when my wife Fran makes communion bread at home the whole house smells just wonderful. When Jesus talks about himself as the bread of life one thing he wants to communicate is that the life he offers is an appealing, desirable, and satisfying life. Life in Christ is a feast, not a famine. This is a point that needs to be made, because we have a tendency to think just the opposite. There is something in us which fears that life with Jesus is going to be tasteless, boring, dull, and a waste of time, so much so that we feel that we will miss out on the real feast. We have this deep-seated feeling that the Christian life and the good life, well they move in opposite directions.

It was that feeling that made the Prodigal Son come to the decision he did and take all of His inheritance and move out of his father's house. He became convinced that the good life was out there where all tastes could be indulged and restraint could be cast aside and one could eat, drink and be merry to one's heart's content. So, he turned his back on what his father provided and reached out for what he thought was feast. The problem was that the more he ate and drank and made merry the more dissatisfied he became. This bread which had tasted so good to start with had all too quickly begun to get moldy and unappetizing. Before long the Prodigal Son began to be consumed by hunger for the life he had left behind, a life where there was some

order and discipline, where he had work to do, where he had a place to be, where he had people to love, and people who loved him for who he was.

We could think the same way about the Ten Commandments. That they are a list of prohibitions which, if adhered to, will take all of the taste out of life. We tend to think of them as a ten-step recipe for making unleavened bread, that is dull tasting flat bread. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In reality they are a ten-step recipe offered by a Master Chef for making the tastiest bread possible. They are a description of basic moral and ethical norms which, if adhered to, give life fullness and flavor.

To be led by the spirit of Jesus is to be led in a liberating, enriching, and life-enhancing way. It is like being given wonderful food to eat. Jesus said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven. Embrace me and my way if you want a really appetizing, satisfying life!" Another thing about this marvelous bread of life through Christ is that it is *always* available.

The shelf space in the bread section of the grocery store is limited. The supplier usually puts out a limited quality of bread on the store shelves. When the Israelites were surviving in the wilderness on manna, they had to gather what they needed before the sun got up, because the manna dried up and disappeared each day in the heat of the sun.

The bread which is offered to us in Christ is not like that manna or those Pepperidge Farms French rolls I like so much. It is new every morning and fresh every evening. It is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

For us here at First Trinity/St Matthew's the celebration of communion is an integral part of every Sunday worship service. Its frequency is a reminder of the constancy with which God is giving the bread of life to us...whether we are up or down, whether we have been wise or foolish, whether we have been loving or hateful, whether we have been faithful or unfaithful.

And this should meet our needs because we are not perfect people. Our lives are erratic, one day we are full of emotion and the next day we can hardly function. One day we are attentive toward those we love and distant from them the next. We are brave and self-confident when things are going well and fearful and weak when things are not?

Thinking back to the story of the Prodigal Son, we have no trouble at all understanding the way older brother reacted to his return and to the welcome home feast. He refused to have anything to do with it. He chose to remain set apart by his resentment and jealousy rather than go in and sit down at the table and enjoy the restored camaraderie. How foolish he was! The banquet went on without him, and everyone taking part had a wonderful time. The older brother was only depriving himself of the greatest blessing life had to offer; namely, the breaking of bread in celebration with his father, his brother and his friends.

If you are cut off from someone by hurt feelings and resentment which you have not let go, today would be as good a time as any to rid yourself of that burden. Take the living Bread and then reach out in the love.

If you are cut off from someone by that person's rejection of you in spite of attempts on your part to restore the relationship, today would be as good a time as any to stop dwelling on that and to concentrate on enjoying your other relationships.

If you have, for the most part, been passing the bread around just in your limited family circle, today would be as good a time as any to start expanding that circle. Is there a social life which needs renewal? Are there church involvements which need revival? For example this fall I would like to propose that we have dinner for 7. One family hosts a dinner or pot luck and invites seven other people. We have never done this as a church and we have many new people to get to know. In this way we will expand our fellowship, or put another way expand our

communion. Is there a neighborhood, a city, a world which needs to be embraced in your prayers and in your work and in your contributions, of course there is, consider expanding your fellowship in this way. Take the living Bread that is given to you each week and then share it with others energizing yourselves to live a larger life, a life in communion with God. Amen