

Sermon for March 23rd, 2014

Third Sunday in Lent, John 6:48-58

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Over the last few weeks we have heard sermons from our Lenten **preaching** series “*Restored in Christ*”. The topic for the first week’s sermon was ‘*broken vessels*’. Last week’s topic was ‘*broken trust*’. **This** week’s topic is ‘*broken bread*’.

There is documentation that people have been baking bread in some form or another for more than **6,000** years. I am rather sure that there were **not** as many varieties to chose from as we have today; **but** it was bread none the less. You may remember from the book of Exodus that during the Passover God instructed His people to eat bread **without** yeast. Another time in the same book we heard the story about when God rained down manna from heaven that **sustained** the Israelites when they had **nothing** to eat. The bread filled them so they could keep going.

I remember when I was young my **mother** used to bake bread. The **aroma** would fill the house. There was nothing better-in my mind-than hot, freshly baked bread with butter **melting** on the top. I can **still** remember the smell and what it **tasted** like. HEAVEN ON EARTH!!!

I have this **bread** board in my office—I **just** showed it to the youth in the children’s sermon. It is about 100 years old. It says, “*Our daily bread.*” It has **cut** marks all over it from many years of use. I **remember** when I got this—it caught my eye as it reminded me of **not only** the nourishment that I need to eat daily to stay alive **and** the bread my mother used to make, **but** I thought it would be **perfect** to have in my office for a **daily** reminder of what the meaning of the ‘*true bread of life is all about*’.

But bread is **not only** what we typically think of. The term ‘*bread*’ can be **symbolic** for those things which keep us alive. As I spoke with the youth about in the children’s sermon this morning there are more things than just **bread** that God provides us with for our daily needs. There is **water** which we cannot live without, there is the **air** we breathe, there is all **types** of food which gives our bodies much needed nutrients to stave off infection and disease, there is **sunshine**, and there is **clothing** to cover and protect our bodies. **All** of these things can be viewed as ‘*the bread of life*’.

In our **first** reading for this morning we heard about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden being **tempted** by the crafty serpent. This is a story I am sure we all have heard before. Adam and Eve were free to eat fruit from **any** tree in the garden **except** this one certain tree—the one that was in the middle of the garden.

Sure enough the **crafty** serpent tempted Eve and she **ate** from that tree. After all the tree *WAS VERY* lovely, and after all she did want to be *WISE*, and after all it was *GOOD FOR FRUIT*. So **how could she resist???** Hmmm—good fruit—she gave some to Adam—and without so much as a, “*I don’t think this is a good idea.*” He **ate** the fruit as well.

Suddenly, their **eyes** were opened, their **sin** was revealed, the **guilt and shame** of their nakedness came to light. They **covered** themselves. They **heard** the sound of God walking in the garden. In shame they **hid** themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the rest you may say, “*is history*”. *Broken bread—indeed.*

In our gospel reading we have John’s version of the Last Supper as John does **not** include an in depth meal scene as the other 3 gospel writers do. We heard the Jews were **already conflicted** about who Jesus was and what He was doing. This text only **heightens** the scandal for the Jews. Now this?? Eating flesh, drinking blood—flesh as **true** food, blood as **true** drink???. That was **TOO MUCH!!!** Jesus had gone too far!!!

But, if we read and interpret John’s gospel like Matthew, Mark, and Luke we are **missing the spiritual point** that John offers us here. You may remember John is the only gospel writer who speaks of Jesus as “*the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and*

*Only who came from the Father.... No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only who is at the Father's side,....” This is why **Jesus can say**, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever. 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 abide in me, and I in them.”*

These are **not** easy words to hear or digest—*no pun intended*—if you **do not** understand the **spiritual** nature of what Jesus is saying here!! He is **not** talking about the manna in the wilderness that God provided which **only** lasted for the day, he is **not** talking about the bread we buy at the market which is fresh today and stale tomorrow. Jesus is talking about the fact that there must be something going on between Him and us as believers in order that the life of God, which is fully present in the Son, becomes our lives as well.

This text **calls us** beyond being **casual** receivers of God's bounty and blessings, beyond those who **recognize** God's presence in our lives, **to those who have a new and committed relationship with Jesus**, the bread of heaven. In taking the body and blood of Jesus Christ we are taking **into ourselves** the very nature of He who came to die on the cross for us and save us from our sin.

Many years ago I remember churches would **only** have Holy Communion once or twice a month—some **still hold** to that practice. **Many** of you—who are

long time members or members who have not been here so long—have mentioned to me that having Holy Communion **every** week is **very** important to you. **Each** week when we come to the communion rail with open hands we are **fed** by Jesus' life giving body and blood. We are fed **spiritually, physically**, and in some cases **emotionally** by receiving this sacrament. The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ **enters** us, it becomes **part** of who we are, it **transforms** our lives.

We **know** the story, the body and blood of Jesus gives us life because it is Jesus himself who is given. Holy Communion draws us into a deeper relationship with God through Jesus, so that we may abide in Him and He in us. This is the **heart and gift** of the sacrament. There can be no proper understanding of this meal apart from the **life-giving participation** in the life and death of Jesus himself.

I will close with some words from **Martin Luther**, (quote) *“We go to the sacrament because there we receive a great treasure and a gift, food for the soul, nourishment and strength, daily food and sustenance so that our faith may be refreshed. It is the highest art to realize that this sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness for in this sacrament we are offered all the treasures Jesus brought from heaven for us.”* (end quote)

In this world of ours we are **all broken bread** living to be *“Restored in Christ through God’s blessing in the sacrament of Holy Communion.”* **AMEN**

