

2018 07 08 – Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

Mark 6:35-44

This summer we are exploring the meaning of the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Line by line, we are asking ourselves what does this really mean? So today our question is, “What did Jesus mean when he prayed, Give us this day our daily bread?”

First let's look at the word, “bread.” It's important to realize that “bread” is used in the bible to represent food in general. In the Mediterranean culture if you invite someone to join you for bread and wine, you are essentially inviting them for a meal. So when we pray for our “daily bread,” we are not just praying to receive one section of the Canada Food Guide. We are praying for a balanced diet.

To explore this a little further it's helpful to look at other places in the New Testament where Jesus dealt with food. One of the most famous stories is the “Feeding of the Five Thousand” - the scripture passage that Jackie just read from the Gospel of Mark. To give you some context for this story, the disciples had just returned home from their first mission. They had been travelling in pairs, teaching and healing wherever they went and they arrived home exhausted. So Jesus and his disciples had decided to get away in a boat to a deserted place to get some rest. But people saw where they were going and a large crowd was there to meet them when they arrived. Despite his own exhaustion, Jesus had compassion for the crowd and he began to teach them.

Before they knew it, supper time was past, stomachs were rumbling and everyone was still there. The disciples said to Jesus, “This is a deserted place, and it’s very late. Why not dismiss them so they can go to the nearby farms and villages and buy something to eat?”

What do you think of the disciples’ suggestion? Does it make sense to you?
(wait for a response – yes, it is a very large crowd, there isn’t enough there to feed them – the disciples don’t have enough) It does seem like a reasonable suggestion doesn’t it? It’s time to eat and the people need to go and find some food.

But Jesus responded, “Give them something to eat yourselves.” The disciples were shocked and replied, “You want us to spend half a year’s wages on bread for them to eat?” They probably thought Jesus had lost his marbles; that the day had been too long and their teacher just wasn’t thinking straight. .

But Jesus persisted. He said, “How many loaves do you have? Go look.” So they went to check it out. It’s not clear where they looked. Did they just check their own bags or did they go through some of the crowd to see what others had brought? Whatever their process was, they came back to Jesus and reported, “Five and two fish.”

They had five loaves and two fish. What would you have done at this point? I know I probably would have said, “Well that answers our question. Obviously we don’t have enough. We need what we have just to feed ourselves. We have no

choice but send them away to search for food on their own.” It’s the only answer that makes sense, isn’t it?

This is how we think every day. We live in a world with an economy that is based on the concept of scarcity. We live in a world that assumes that there isn’t enough. That’s why we hoard, why prices increase, why we think we need tariffs, why we hide what we have. We think that is the only way that we, as individuals, as provinces, as countries, will have enough.

But what did Jesus do? He told the disciples to have the people sit down on the grass in groups of hundreds and fifties. Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. Jesus gave thanks to God for what he had. It wasn’t very much, it certainly didn’t seem like it would be enough to feed everyone, but Jesus first, gave thanks.

It’s interesting to compare this meal to a typical church potluck or family gathering. Picture the table covered in bowls and platters of food. Imagine grace being said as mouths water and imaginations are filled with the thoughts of delicious meat and potatoes and vegetables and dessert. Then picture Jesus with the loaves and fish in his hands, his eyes raised to heaven and the crowd wondering what Jesus was going to do with this meagre offering.

What did Jesus do? Well Jesus broke the loaves and handed them to the disciples to distribute among the people. He also passed out the fish among them. He broke the food into smaller pieces and he gave it to the crowd.

It's hard for us to imagine how that amount of food even fed the first group of fifty. But the story tells us that, "They all ate until they had their fill. The disciples gathered up the leftovers and filled twelve baskets of broken bread and fish. In all, five thousand families ate that day,"

It was a miracle. There is no other way of describing what happened that day. It was a miracle that demonstrated the amazing abundance that exists in God's world. It was a miracle that shows us how God's creation always has enough for all. It was a miracle that demonstrates the amazing things that God can do with what we have to offer..

Where did the food come from? I don't know. Maybe the generosity of the disciples became an example for other people in the crowd and everyone pulled out the food they had brought. Maybe they were afraid to open their bags or their pockets until someone made that first move to share. Maybe the food just appeared on the ground, like the manna that God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness. No matter how it happened, one of the things that is clear is that often we don't even realize the resources that are available to us.

What is important in this story is realizing that someone has to make the first move. Someone has to be the first to take what they have, give thanks to God, break it into equal pieces, and then give it to another. We are all called to share what we have so that all of God's people will have enough.

That's what we are praying about. We are asking God to give "us" not just me, but everyone, our daily bread. Not more than we need but just enough. In the version of Jesus' prayer that we spoke this morning Parker Palmer emphasized this understanding of Jesus's words when he wrote, "Give us this day the bread we need, Give it to those who have none."

<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/07/lords-prayer-father-mother.html>