

“A Slice of Life”

Pennside Presbyterian Church

Rev. David Duquette

We know the old saying, “Be careful what you wish for, you may get it.”

The crowd had a good meal yesterday. 5 loaves and 2 fishes turned into a feast for 5000 with 12 baskets of leftovers. They ate well yesterday; they’d like to eat well today, so when they catch up to Jesus, they know what they want; he knows what they want – bread, but he gave them more than they bargained for; he gave them a slice of life.

We’re not so different from that crowd. We’ve prayed, “Give us this day our daily bread” with quiet desperation. We’ve known need and what it feels like to have our security taken away. We’ve gone looking for Jesus for what we can get rather than what we can give.

The crowd represents us at our worst. The crowd shows up on Christmas Eve and Easter; their commitment to the church and to Jesus Christ ebbs and flows. Their priority is always how they are being fed, and if/when the preacher falls short in this regard, the church doesn’t offer this or that, they’re off looking for a good meal. The church is simply the purveyor of religious goods and services, and if/when they don’t like our product, then it’s time to go shopping for another church.

The crowd represents us at our worst, but we have to start somewhere. As easy as it is to condemn the crowd for only thinking with their stomachs, the crowd was hungrier than that (I submit is hungrier than that.). Yes, they wanted another good meal, but they wanted more than that – they wanted a sign. *John 6:30 (NRSV) “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?”*

The crowd was hungry. The smell of bread was in the air. The crowd was on the way to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover; the festival of unleavened *bread*. They were on their way to take their place with Moses and Aaron and the children of Israel who passed through the Red Sea on dry ground, faced starvation in the wilderness, and woke up one morning to discover, “What is it?” Manna. Daily

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bread.

Jesus has multiplied 5 loaves and 2 fishes to feed 5000+ beside the Sea of Galilee. Somehow, last night he crossed that Sea. So, he’s teaching; he’s crossing the sea; and he’s giving out bread. Could he be the one we’ve been hungering for? Could he be ... Messiah?

The crowd was hungry, but this hunger could not be satisfied with loaves and fishes. Jesus has led us beyond our shallow lives of circumstance and situation. He’s put us in touch with our deep hunger; our hunger for hope, for purpose, for God. He’s put us in touch with the hunger that is so central to who we are and what it means to be alive that it frightens us. We need a distraction! *“Give us a sign.”* *“Give us bread like Moses did.”* A good meal will make the hunger go away.

Be careful what you ask for, especially what you ask Jesus for, you will get more than you bargained for. We ask for bread, and Jesus offers us a slice of life.

John 6:35 (NRSV) “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

John 6:29 (NRSV) “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

When is the last time you had a slice of life? When did you last experience just how good life can be when *“the bread of life”* fills you and living water quenches your deepest thirst? When is the last time you said, “Jesus, I believe?”

We’ve all snacked on substitutes – righteous causes that call the faithful to rise up and do something – “Onward Christian Soldiers!”

We saw that this week with the hullabaloo surrounding Chik-fil-a. A Facebook posting on Thursday showed a church sign with the following message: “I wish the lines to sign up to volunteer at the Soup Kitchen or for VBS were as long as the lines at Chik-fil-a. God.”

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Both sides of the debate feasted on this cultural fault line, but did anyone come closer to God? Did anyone receive a slice of life when we gathered in our usual and customary groups? Or did we distract ourselves yet again from the deep hunger of our souls with a snack of superficial self-righteousness? Did we offer anyone a slice of life, or did we settle for a gospel that made Jesus in our image?

The Chik-fil-a kerfuffle made the headlines, but we are experts at distracting ourselves away from Jesus for the very best of reasons. “I’m too busy to read the Bible right now, Jesus. I have a report to write.” “I can’t pray right now, Jesus. I’m late for a meeting.” “I don’t have room in my life for a relationship with you right now, Jesus. I’ve got too much on my plate.” We are masters at substituting style for substance.

Isaiah 55:2 (NRSV) Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Stop snacking! Superficial self-righteousness is no substitute for the riches of a relationship with God. A relationship that nourishes us body and soul with truth that is deeper than clichés and slogans; a relationship that renews and restores us with love that is deeper than “likes” and preferences; a relationship that provides us with a center that will hold in the midst of life’s storms; a relationship that is a slice of life.

Brothers and sisters, being a Presbyterian isn’t about agendas; it’s not about causes; it’s not about righting every wrong and overcoming error with truth.

It’s about Jesus. Only Jesus. Always Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

God sent him to give us a slice of life, abundant, blessed, very good life for everyone and anyone who believes in him. He is the gospel. He is good news.

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When is the last time you had a taste of that gospel bread? When is the last time you said to Jesus, “Lord, I’m hungry. Give me this bread?” When is the last time you converted from the usual routine to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ?

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John 6:29 (NRSV) “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Brothers and sisters, stop snacking! Start feasting! Accept no substitutes! Dispense with the distractions. If there’s no room on your plate for a slice of life, then take a close look at what is on your plate. What is keeping you from a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ?

The crowd found Jesus. We can find him too. All we have to do is ask and we will receive. If this is all strange and new to you, or if it’s been a while, or if there is something stirring in you, a deep hunger that longs to be satisfied, ask today, “Jesus, give me this bread. I believe that you are the bread of life. Help my unbelief. You are my Lord. You are my Savior. You are the one God sent to save the world. Lord, I am hungry. Give me a slice of life. ” Amen.