

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: Out Roaming
Sermon: The Bread of Life

Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15

The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

10 While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

11 The Lord said to Moses, 12 “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’”

13 That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.

John 6:35

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Sermon

So it was at bedtime, and I started to read some nursery rhymes and stories. Help me out here. There was these German kids. Hansel and Gretel, their mother and father drop them into the middle of the forest because they didn’t have enough food for four people, so to ease their hunger pains, they get rid of two of their mouths. The kids find a house made of what? Candy. And the witch inside, what does she want to do with these kids? Eat them. Not so sure this is a good tale to tell kids. So we moved on. Ah Goldilocks and three bears. The bears make a meal, go off into the woods for a walk as it cools. The privacy-invading broad comes in and eats their food. In the original story, the bears come back, find the girl and eat her, although our version politically correctly said that they chased her away. Next story. Little Red Riding Hood. Carrying food to grandma. You know how this one goes, grandma gets eaten and tries to get Little Red. Next one, Georgie Porgie, eating pudding and pie. Next one, Little Miss Muffet, eating what? Curds and Whey. Yuch. Next one, Jack Sprat, This little Piggie, Little Jack Horner, Simple Simon, by the time I was done reading, I was starving. All of these bedtime stories have to do with food. Almost every one. And in many of these, food was the subject, not just a passing phrase. Pease Porridge what? Simple Simon met a what? I did some research. When many of these were written over in the old world, many of these were written during time of famine and hunger. For most of history, food was not a given. Even today, depending upon where you live, food is not a given. Experts tell us a civilization can only advance if there is surplus of food. If you have times of hunger, all you can think about is food. And it creeps into the vocabulary. These nursery rhymes are telling us about suffering and obsession with

finding their next meal before they starve. They were written by hungry people. Old mother Hubbard, went to her cupboard, to get her poor dog a bone. But when she got there, the cupboard was what? And so the poor dog had none. Not to have food fixates your thinking on food.

So Here's Moses. One month out on a forty year journey. Out of Egypt on their way to the promised land. They were used to having someone else provide for them. Yes, they were slaves and had hard work, but they were also dependent upon their masters for their survival. The Egyptians fed their slaves. So now we have slaves, who are not used to providing food for themselves - and to be fair, they are in the middle of the wilderness. Where are they going to get food? And it becomes such an issue that they grumble to Moses and Aaron for us. They repeat a phrase we hear time and time again, why did you bring us out here to die? And they remember, with rose colored glasses, of all the food they had back in Egypt, back in their slavery days. As if they ever had enough food. Moses appeals to God, and God provides. It's a lesson in the wilderness, time and time again. For every conceivable problem, the people whined. And for every conceivable problem, God provided.

And they receive Manna. And Quail. Quail came in the evening, and manna came in the morning. Meat and bread. The people who make our nutritional pyramid would be proud. Except for the fruit, but their walking in the desert, so we'll give them a little slack. Manna. There have been many different attempts to explain what manna is. Several naturalistic explanations for the manna have come forward. For example, some equate it with the sticky and often granular honeydew that is excreted in Sinai in early June by various scale insects and that solidifies rapidly through evaporation. But no naturally occurring substance fits all the data that we have through the texts, and several factors suggest that manna was in fact the Lord's unique provision for his people in this desert. The appearance and taste of the manna suggest that this was something that not known by the cultures of the day. The daily abundance of the manna and its regular surge and slump depending on the need hardly fit a natural phenomenon. On the sixth day, a double portion showed up, so on the seventh day, the people didn't have to collect it. The seventh day was a day of rest. It would also take a lot of manna to feed these people. Bread flakes all of the desert floor that disappear throughout the day is really really weird! And the name itself is a clue. They called it manna. In Hebrew, the phrase, "What is it?" is pronounced in one word, "Manna." If we walk outside, we'd say, "What is it?" They walked out side and asked, "Manna." And the name stuck. They had no idea what it was. Except that it was a gift from God to keep them going. In this story I learn this: God does not remove suffering. The people still had to walk in the wilderness! But the Lord provided for them in that experience!

I have a confession to make, if you are interested. I love bread. I love hot bread. I love hot bread with butter. In fact, I've been known to choose a restaurant simply because of the bread. Today is World Communion Sunday. Congregations from across the world come together and once again take bread and cup. My kids love communion Sunday, because they get to take leftover Jesus home. We are having a celebration in the park on Sunday, socially distant of course. 10 a.m. at Rivercrest Park, northwest corner.

And so, Jesus has my attention when He says, "I am the bread of life." In essence Jesus says to us, "Just as bread sustains your physical life, I am what sustains, satisfies, and secures your spiritual and your eternal life. And, Jesus says, "I am the only thing that can do that." You can search the whole world over, you can fill your life with all sorts of activity, even religious activity, you can fill your life with stuff, but I am the only One who is the "bread of life."

He was born in a town Bethlehem, House of Bread. To become the bread of life. I love the imagery of Psalm 34: Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

Take care this week. If you are hungry, find some bread. If you are spiritually hungry, find some bread. The bread of Life. And the family of God said, AMEN!

Children's Time

Hey Kiddos! Thanks for stopping by today. I don't know about you, but I love to travel. Wouldn't it be cool to snap your fingers and be in France? Or by the Pyramids of Egypt? Or on the beaches in Hawaii? (Pause) I said beaches. (Pause.) That's better. My wife and I are trying to get every state in our country by the time we're 50! Time's running out. I have to get to New Jersey in the next couple of year to finish it out. She still has West Virginia. And every where we go, we find people of faith. We have gone to church in many of the states we've visited. Not only in our country, but we also like to travel outside of the Good Ol' USA. Could be Canada, Mexico, over in Asia or Europe - still have to get Africa, Australia and Antartica, but we'll get there. and guess what, we've found people of faith in those countries as well. We have gone to church in places that don't even speak our languages. But they love Jesus, just the same.

Today is World Communion Sunday. Today we remember that God's church isn't just here inside our sanctuary. It is full of people from all around the United States and all around our world. We all do God's work together! Each of us has something we can do to show God's love to the world. Take time today, find some bread, maybe even a type from a different country. And remember that God's love is all around the world. Thanks for stopping by!

Intro:

Oregon City United Methodist Church, friends and guests, good morning. What a blessing it is to worship with you today. For us, it is World Communion Sunday, when we recognize our relationship to other faithful bodies in this body of Christ. This Sunday, we are having a Communion service in the park, RiverCrest Park in O.C. at 10 a.m. Bring a mask. Let us open with this Word: Almighty God, your word bursts forth into our lives like a glorious sunrise. You speak, and our hearts rejoice. You command, and our eyes are opened.

The sound of your voice brings revival to our souls. True and righteous one, living Word, light our way. As we listen to your Spirit, may the words of our mouths and the thoughts of our hearts be accepted in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen. Here are our announcements:

Prayer:

God of our lives, who offers to us peace in the midst of silence, a moment apart from the demands and struggles of life, relax our spirits today. We bring to you the names and situations which have claimed our worries and our attention. We come seeking healing for those who suffer, comfort for those who mourn, direction for the lost, and peace for all your people. We have brought our joys and celebrations to you, thanking you for the many ways in which you have touched our lives with your love. Give us peace and strength for our service to this world in your name. In Christ's name we prayer, we share his prayer...

Closing:

The Banquet of God's love has been given to you. You have received blessing upon blessing. Go now into the world in which noise and confusion reign. Bring peace and hope in Christ's Name to all you meet. God's peace and love be with you now and always. AMEN.

Offertory:

Your offering last week empowered ministry within our congregation and responded to the needs of our community. It also supported the advocacy work of the General Board of Church and Society, which works on justice issues such as global hunger and poverty. On a day we celebrate the bread and the cup, we also recognize the hunger that many face in the world.

“There are 836 million people living in extreme poverty. Children and elderly are particularly at risk, and nearly half of all deaths in children under five are attributable to under-nutrition.

“At the same time, we know that enough food is produced globally to feed everyone. And the wealth of the eight richest people in the world is now equal to that of the poorest 3.6 billion people combined.

The hungry are across the world, and the hungry are here in Oregon City. With a presence on Capitol Hill in Washington DC and the United Nations in New York City, the General Board of Church and Society helps organize action and advocate for policies that reflect the love and compassion of Christ as reflected in our Social Principles. Ministries like these happen, thanks to the way the people of The United Methodist Church live and give connectionally.

I invite you to give generously, as we worship God through sharing our gifts, tithes, and offerings..