

August 1, 2021

Greeting, announcements

Call to Worship

One: Hungering and thirsting, we come to worship God.

All: **Jesus is the Living Bread!**

One: Seeking God's direction and wisdom, we come to worship God.

All: **Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.**

One: At times, broken or confused, still, we come to worship God.

All: **Jesus is the Light of the World. Together: Let us worship God!**

We are the people of God. Let us draw near to the God of our Salvation and let us pray.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Come Spirit of Gentleness, come and sweep your wind among us in this place. Stir us, coax us, call us, goad us. Open our eyes, whisper in our ears and draw us into your loving presence. Come, Spirit of Gentleness, and blow away the cobwebs and entanglements of this week. May your transforming presence fill us with wonder. Create in us, hearts that long to love and serve you in this place, in our homes in our places of work and in all we do. Jesus, look into our hearts and help us to see those things that you want to change, to heal, to strengthen, and to nourish. Forgive our inability to love ourselves, and help us to remember that you made us in your image with your holy hands of love. Forgive our grudges, or those times we settled for bitterness. Forgive our fears when we forget that you are faithful in all things. Mold us, and re-shape us according to your perfect will and endless grace. Unclench our hands, that we may reach out to one another. Open our lips that we may drink in the delight and wonder of this life. Open our eyes, that we may see Christ in friend and stranger. Lead us in the path that you set before us, and help us to trust in your love and care. In the strong name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance

We are an Easter people! Along with all of God's people throughout out the ages we have this assurance: that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ. There is nothing that we can do to separate us from God's powerful love. We are forgiven people. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn. # 754 From the slave pens of the delta ( the tune from #528 Jesus calls us here to meet Him)

Children's time

Prayer for Understanding

Holy God, May the reading of your Word be for us the bread you send from heaven and that gives life to the world. We ask you to nourish us in the ways of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Scriptures

Exodus 16: 2-4, 9-15

2The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." 4Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not....

...9Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.'" 10And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. 11The Lord spoke to Moses and said, 12"I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'" 13In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. 15When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

John 6:24-35

24So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. 25When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." 28Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 30 So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." 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.

Meditation: What is it? By The Rev Cathy Victor

About 40 years ago I woke up one morning and went into the kitchen; probably to make some coffee. But I stopped in my tracks and looked around the kitchen. There was a white substance everywhere. It was on the floor, on the dining area carpet, in the curtains, on the walls. It was in the playpen filled with toys and it was in the laundry hamper of clean folded clothes. This whiteness was scattered all over. What was it, you ask?

Well, there is a very small chance it might have been Manna, but it was actually flour. I had left a new bag of flour on the counter the night before, and our delightful 3 year old, Dan had managed to open it and scatter it with abandon all over the kitchen. I was in the habit of baking bread quite often and Dan would join in, kneading his own little piece of dough. I suppose he thought he would get started early. Needless to say, we didn't make bread that morning. I had some choices: to cry, to get angry or to laugh. We probably had a little talk, but mostly we all laughed and it still makes me laugh. He recently referred to it as The Five Roses Massacre.

The Israelites were mystified that morning long ago. The Back to Egypt Committee had had words with Moses about how ridiculous their journey was becoming. The people of Israel, were wandering in the wilderness. They were fed up, well, actually they were hungry and running out of food. They complained to Moses about this being chosen jazz, and were rebellious and persistent in their complaints. Moses assured them that God would feed them all. And so that morning that we read about in Exodus, they woke up to find something white outside of their tents. They said to Moses and to one another. What is it? Or in Hebrew:

Man Hu - which simply means what is it ? Manna. They might have been hoping for Asiago cheese gluten-tastic artisanal baguettes, but no. It was Manna.

Moses told them to only take what they needed for that day, and there would be more the next day. And in the evening there were quails to bbq. Now this manna, sounds like some strange mythical food, but in fact it still exists. There is a species of plant lice that gorges on the fruit of the Tamarisk trees that grow in the Sinai. The lice have their fill of the fruit, and then excrete a gooey form that crystallizes over night and melts in the heat of the day. It is a sugary kind of white dust - described also as being as tiny as pieces of coriander. It is a naturally occurring crud, courtesy of a parasite. It is Bug Juice. What an unusual miracle.

And it's interesting to note that the Manna doesn't appear on the Sabbath, because every part of creation would be understood to observe the Sabbath, and so there is double the amount the day before. Roast Quails and manna. Just enough for each day. You can find pictures of it on the internet. Enjoy.

Last week the reading in John that Rev. Joan preached about described Jesus feeding the five thousand - well there were actually more than that because women and children wouldn't have been counted. It was a miracle of food. Back to last weeks reading in John, Jesus asks Philip how they are going to feed this crowd. Is there a take out nearby? No, it seems not. Jesus knows the answer of course, but doesn't say more. There only seems to be 2 fish and 5 loaves that a young boy is willing to share. His gracious generosity becomes a gift that Jesus uses to feed them all until they are satisfied. God's abundance shines. And even after Jesus and his disciples take their boat across the Sea of Galilee and head back to Capernaum, the crowd seeks him out.

They figure they are witnessing another Moses and they let him know they want more bread. Give us this bread always they cry! Jesus chastises them. 'You seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.' You think I'm good for a free meal. To be frank, many have stumbled into the desire to lean on Jesus, in the hopes of gaining material success. Jesus unpacks, and explains the story of Manna in the wilderness. He tells them it wasn't Moses who fed the people in the wilderness. It was God. God gives the bread that gives life. - Yes! That's what we want - they say! And Jesus tells them: I AM the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Do you remember when God says to Moses: I AM who I AM? I AM, means YAHWEH. It means this is God speaking. And in the Jewish tradition one is not even supposed to speak that name. Hebrew didn't have any vowels at that point, so it was unclear how to pronounce it anyway.

The gospel of John is filled with Jesus' I AM statements . You remember them: I am the light of the world. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the true vine. I am the resurrection and the life.

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Jesus IS the gift of God that endures, and God's surprising acts of grace are there each day to feed us in body, mind and spirit. God's Holy Hands created you as well as the miracles we encounter each day. Yes - Miracles permeate our lives. Have you noticed them?

The Israelites kept a jar of Manna in the Ark beside the tablets of the law, so they wouldn't forget God love for them.

Sometimes we don't recognize the manna or the bug juice - God's gift - that is right in front of us, right under our noses. Sometimes we take out Manna insurance just in case God doesn't provide. ...toilet paper in a pandemic anyone? We may pray for something in particular (such as food) and God always answers. It just may not be in the specific way that we imagine it.

The people of God took it all one day at a time for 40 years, sometimes complaining but always being provided for. Forty years, in the wilderness, for the Israelites. For forty days Jesus stays

in the desert, wrestling with temptation and finding his way. It struck me as funny when I realized it was forty years ago that my son Dan covered the kitchen in flour. Forty is the biblical standard for a long time. Forty days, or years is the stock biblical word indicating a time of testing the authenticity and the reality of one's life. But Hope is at the core of it all. (Eugene Peterson, Under the Unpredictable Plant)

For Noah, there was 40 days of a cleansing of a kind of moral pollution in the world. Wilderness time is about learning to live by faith. There are 40 days of Jesus' resurrection appearances. Forty days, years, or what have you, is not just making some kind of progress as our culture might have us believe. It is a place of discernment, training, a time of something new being born. It is a time that 'shapes us for Glory.' But maybe we need to practice recognizing it. Bruce Cockburn has a song called Forty Years in the Wilderness. He speaks of Angel made graffiti. Have any angels crossed your path? Have you seen any messages from Angels?

We may expect certain answers and receive bug juice instead, something we didn't have in mind. Is it staring you right in the face? Are you asking What is it?

The Examen is a practice that has been used by many Christians over hundreds of years. It can be as simple or as fulsome as you make it. What is it? The first thing is to get centred and relaxed. Invite Jesus to sit with you and illumine your day. There are a number of questions to ponder, but a good question to begin with is to ask yourself, Where did I see or experience God's grace and love today? Or put another way, what is it that Jesus has fed you. What fills your heart, your life? What gives you strength? For this IS a wilderness that we are walking in, and we need to learn to name the manna, to see where it is.

I'm driving my car, and trying to get onto a busy road. A kind driver lets me in front of them, and I raise my hand to say thanks. There's a small gift, but then I look in my rear view mirror to see them laughing. And I realize they are reading the decal on my rear window which states, 'My Dachshund ate your stick family.' (The dachshund is chasing a stick family in the decal). Their laughter delights me. What is it? To me, it's another piece of manna.

I take my dog for a walk and a father and young son stop me and ask if they can pet Johann my dog. They are beyond excited. They laugh at his bow tie and the dad tells me this made their day. Another piece of manna.

There is the smile on that little girls face that I saw, or it's a text from my kids . Or my son solves one of my computer mysteries. One of my neighbours stops in our basement garage to tell me one of my tail lights is burned out. Let me fix it, he says. He drives over to Canadian Tire, changes the light bulb which is something that I never would have figured out. I ask what it cost so I can pay him. Oh never mind he says. Pay it forward. More manna.

My 8 year old grandson asks if we can FaceTime, and he tells me dog jokes. A hummingbird hovers in my face on my balcony garden. Someone gives me a hug. What is all of this? Manna. The bread of angels. The bread of heaven.

Barbara Brown Taylor wrote this in her book Bread of Angels. What makes something bread from heaven? Is it the thing itself or the one who sends it? How you answer those questions has a lot to do with how you sense God's presence in your life....If you are willing to look at everything that comes to you as coming to you from God, then there will be no end to the Manna in your life. Nothing will be too ordinary or too transitory to remind you of God. The miracle is that God is always sending us something to eat....God gives the true bread from heaven, the bread that gives life to the world. God provides us with exactly what we need,

each day. Jesus is our bread of heaven. Even if it might appear as bug juice. Where do you see God's grace, that heavenly manna in your life?

Hymn of Response #507 Break Now the Bread of Life

Invitation to the offering

Our God is generous and loving, and has blessed us in many ways. Let us take this moment to offer our gifts for God to use.

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, we offer ourselves with our gifts this morning, confident that you have a purpose for them and for us. All this we bring before you, because of the love you have poured out on us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Bless each person and multiply each gift, that your rule may be realized in all people. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Loving and eternal God, We thank-you and praise you that you accept us and love us as we are, And yet you long for us to grow and blossom into people who are whole. Set us free from our fears, our misdirected concerns for our rights, and the burdens we need not carry. Teach us to hear the questions that we have but are afraid to voice or even consider. Show us the outcast within our selves... Holy Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness, in words and silence, receive our prayers for others.....In your love and in your power, bring healing; bring peace..... We bring to you those who need your healing touch: -for those whose illness is long, painful or difficult to cure... In your love and in your power, bring healing; bring peace..... We name before you those who are troubled in mind, those who feel trapped, those who have lost hope, and those who are burdened with grief.....

We pray for your church in all places; In troubled and broken countries and in peaceful ones. And in the churches in this community. Enable your people to walk in the love of Christ in all they do. In your love and in your power; bring healing bring peace..... Jesus, companion, redeemer and Lord; We reach out to touch you and are surprised by joy; and the sustaining peace that only you can bring. ...Come O Holy Spirit and bestow your gifts on those in need: heal what is wounded, mend what is broken, wash what is soiled, water what is dry, warm what is cold. Find what is lost and refresh what is weary.....

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who shines like the sun in the glory of the resurrection, and taught us to pray,

Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Benediction

May the Maker's blessing be yours, Encircling you round, above you, within you.  
May the Son's blessing be yours, The wine and the water, the bread and the stories to feed you, To remind you. May the Spirit's blessing be yours, The wind, the fire, the still small voice, to comfort you, to disturb you. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God, And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen