

Worship at home

August 1, 2021

Thanks to Hannah Marnoch and Doug White for providing music for this week



<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/hands+broken+bread>

God calls us to worship:

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.
Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.¹

Let us worship God.

We bring our praise and confessions:

God of majesty and mystery,
we gather before you in humble wonder.
Source of all that is, your breadth and depth are beyond our imagining.
Word of hope and healing, your grace defies our explanations.
Spirit of purpose and possibility, you touch us when we least expect it.
Receive our praise and prayer this day,
and prepare us to receive the Bread of Life in this hour of worship.
For we come to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,
as your Holy Spirit prays within us, to stir us to new life.

God of mercy:
you have called us to be thankful for your good gifts to us,
but too often we have taken them for granted as if we deserved them.

You have called us to be hopeful through the gospel of Jesus Christ,
but too often despair has come upon us,
and the cares of the world have weighed us down.

¹ Psalm 62.

You have called us to be joyful in the wonder of your presence among us,
but too often we become mired in the mundane
and lose the gift of reverence.

By your saving power, O God,
enable us to celebrate your love for us with joy and thanksgiving.
Amen.

God assures us of his forgiveness:

In Christ, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. God has made peace with us through the Cross of Jesus Christ. In Christ, all things hold together. Accept the peace of Christ and make peace with one another in his name.²

In response to the gospel,

we confess our faith and offer our lives and resources:

Please remember to prayerfully make your offerings to the congregation of which you are most associated. If you're a member/adherent of Knox-Moore or St. Andrew's, Mooretown, please send your offering to Howard McKellar or Judy Armstrong.

Hymn: #346 (verse 1) "Jesus the Christ said: I am the bread"

God speaks to us through his Word:

² Ibid.

The Bread of Life

*Speak to us through the scriptures this day, O God,
and by the power of your Holy Spirit, give us a deeper understanding of your Word for our lives and our times,
through Christ, the Living Word. Amen.*

READ JOHN 6:22-60.

1. We began this series by asking the question Jesus asked his very first disciples:

What are you looking for?

That same question is implied in Jesus' response to the query from the crowd when they found him on the other side of the sea:

*Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me,
not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill...'³*

The day before Jesus had used 5 loaves of barley bread and 2 fish – with thanks given to the Father in heaven – to feed 5,000 people. With 12 baskets left over.

After, Jesus followed his disciples across the sea to Capernaum, and there the crowd found him.

Jesus was most concerned with addressing the reason the crowd went looking for him. He ignored their question (“Rabbi, when did you come here?”) and focused instead on their intention.

Although they saw Jesus: although they knew of him, although they knew he could perform miracles; yet, they failed to see with the eyes of faith who Jesus was and why he had come.

But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.⁴

They wanted Jesus to replace their current government and be their king.

In their understanding, the person who could meet their tangible needs and fill their bellies was the one who should be their king.

And, they're not wrong.

A government's primary job is to look after the needs of the citizens. So, if your current king is not doing that, and along comes someone who can seemingly meet your

³ John 6:26

⁴ John 6:36

needs using very few resources, you're probably going to, at the very least, entertain the thought of a change in government!

And that's what has happened here:

When the people saw the signs that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.⁵

What they were looking for was a change in the social order. They saw that this Jesus could do that, yet, they failed to perceive the means by which Jesus would do that.

2. Of course, Jesus is in no way opposed to satisfying our tangible and immediate needs. He just finished feeding 5,000 people!

He knows, that if we look to satisfy only our basic, human, physical needs, we won't be satisfied for long. And if we are concerned only with satisfying our basic needs then our thoughts, speech, and actions will be used to that end. A situation that ultimately creates violence as everyone thinks they need to fend for themselves!

Human beings need food, shelter, water, and air; security and purpose; relationships and love. Yet, all of that, while immediate and measurable, is temporary. Relationships come and go; purpose changes; each of us are only a few circumstances away from homelessness; and, although we might eat, we will be hungry again.

By nature of our being creation, we will only be satisfied when we are in harmony with the One who has been from the beginning and will be until the end; the One through whom came all things; the One in whom is the light of all people.

The contentment that endures, regardless of circumstances, is when we are in harmonious fellowship with our Father in heaven.

3. The crowd went looking for Jesus because he satisfied their immediately tangible needs. They saw him as a miracle worker and a rabbi who could tell them the best practices of highly holy people:

⁵ John 6:14, 15

What must we do to perform the works of God?⁶

Although Jesus is a strong advocate for meeting the needs of others, he did not say that the will of God is to do good works! Elsewhere in the scriptures he did, but not in this context. Instead, he said:

*This is the work of God, that you **believe** in him whom he has sent.⁷*

Jesus of Nazareth is the Way to fellowship with the One who fed the Israelites in the wilderness and who gave them water to drink from the rocks. Such blessings were not the result of human ingenuity; it was not Moses who provided the manna and the water, it was God.

Jesus of Nazareth is the light that reveals the way. And, just as the God-given manna nourished the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land,

Jesus is the God-given bread that nourishes, sustains, and satisfies us on our journey to life with God in the here-and-now and forevermore.

Only when we rest in that divine fellowship can we truly think, speak, and do in ways that change the social order and reveal the truth of God.

4. If Jesus is the bread of life, the task of the disciple is to eat him!

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 have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.⁸

As the disciples so astutely put it: “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?!”

I like to think that Jesus had a smirk on his face as he repeatedly told the crowd they had to eat his flesh and drink his blood!

To take his words literally would be cannibalism! Not only is that abhorrent to most human beings, it is expressly forbidden in the Law of Moses!

Jesus must have known this would get a rise out of his audience!

⁶ John 6:28

⁷ John 6:29

⁸ John 6:53, 54

And, his carefully chosen words are definitely memorable!

Eating and drinking Jesus on the Way to eternal life!

No, Christian discipleship does not involve cannibalism! Although, that was one of the rationales for the early persecutions of the church. And, it's easy to understand why when we remember that most Christian worship was done in secret and all the outside world knew was that the Christians gathered to chant some passages of scripture and eat the body and blood of a man who had been crucified!

But, although there are suggestions of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in this passage, the lesson is more general.

Five times Jesus spoke of believing.

Believing that he is the Son of God.

Believing that he reveals to us the One with whom we can know peace.

Believing that by his sacrificial death, our Father in heaven draws us to himself.

Believing that he still speaks through the written words of Scripture.

Believing that in our prayerful hearing his Word in the written text, the Holy Spirit teaches us what God needs us to know.

If Jesus is the bread of life, the Scriptures together with prayer and worship, are the knives, forks, and spoons by which the Holy Spirit nourishes our faith through which we can truly see Jesus in the quotidian monotony, know God, and have eternal life.

For our good, the health of the nation, and the glory of God,
Amen.

Hymn #357 "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds"

We respond with prayer, faith, and service:

God in whom we live and move and have our being:

As we gather in your presence today,

we are aware of many challenges in our own lives,

in the lives of those we care about and in the world around us.

Thank you for your faithfulness to each of us

and to your whole creation,

given all that we share and all the different situations we face.

Show us how our care and concern for the world and for each other

can respond to the needs we name before you today:

In faithful silence, we lay before you the concerns on our hearts this day:

We pray for those who have been in the headlines lately,

for those situations in the world and in our country that concern us deeply,

and for all whose lives cry out to you and to us for help...

We pray for those who are suffering in our community

and for those struggling to overcome the effects of the pandemic:

those who are ill and those who are bereaved;

those struggling to make ends meet or find the right job;

those who are lonely

and those who are moving and in need of new friends...

We pray for those looking forward to a new beginning this fall:

those hoping for a school year with fewer pandemic interruptions;

those starting at a new school or in a new college or university program;

those beginning new jobs or new activities;

those welcoming new members into the family through birth or marriage:

We pray for our congregation in a time of reorganizing
after months of pandemic restrictions.

Gather us in to new and renewed friendships.

Help us see where you call us to reach out with your love and generosity.

Equip us to meet every challenge we face with hearts full of faith and commitment
for we dare to pray in the way Christ taught us as his followers:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with His blessing:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Amen.