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Lent 1 C – March 6, 2022

“Bread”

Read: John 6: 35 - 40/ Memorize Exodus 16: 12

How many of you have enjoyed a slice or chunk of bread, freshly baked, out of the oven? In my personal opinion the best thing you can add to it is a nice slab of butter. When you bite into it, how does it feel? More importantly, how does it taste? Most cultures have a bread of some kind. In many cultures it is the mainstay of a meal.

My sister, Ruth, married Pasquale Bosselli over 50 years ago. Pasquale had an older brother, Joseph and a younger brother, Edward, which are much more common names. How did he come to be named Pasquale? He was born soon after Grandpa Pasquale died and his parents, immigrants from Sicily, wanted to honor Grandpa. When he introduced himself he would always call himself Pat or Patsy.

One of the things my sister learned through his family was that when dinner was served, there was bread on the table. It did not matter what you were serving. Every dinner needed bread. If it wasn't there, there would be comments, sometimes in Sicilian, which, obviously my sister did not understand, but she caught the meaning quickly.

I feel that eating warm bread can definitely be a spiritual experience along with a physical one. I've even called it heavenly, at times. When I walk in the house and Roxann has been baking bread, the aroma permeates everything in the house. At the same time, that slice of bread, as it slides into your mouth is pretty sensual. Your lips, your tongue, your teeth, your taste buds are delighted to receive this wonderful gift.

Apparently it was pretty important to Jesus, too. Because in that prayer He taught to His disciples, His first three petitions dealt with our relationship to His Father: that we would acknowledge Him as our Father in heaven, that we would use His name properly and that we would work for His Kingdom to come in this world just

as it has come in heaven. Those are all very spiritual things. Then we get to that fourth petition: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Unfortunately, Jesus was not around physically, when the Israelites landed up in the wilderness. They had a problem. Things were not going their way. They were hungry. Rather than asking God, they complained to Moses. They even demanded and threatened. If we don’t get some food here, if things don’t improve, we might just go back to Egypt, where things had been so much better.

God the Father, who had freed them from captivity, listened to their disobedience and certainly could have punished them for it, but didn’t. He knew their needs and He knew they needed to learn some things about Him. After all they had been in Egypt for over four hundred years.

They had not been very good at worshiping Him or listening to Him. That’s obvious by the fact that they had totally forgotten that God cares about our physical and spiritual needs. If they had only remembered that, they could have simply asked God for what they needed and He would have provided it.

But instead, they fell into old habits. They thought that by demanding and threatening they would get their way, which they sort of did. Think about that miracle of the manna, perhaps you remember the fact that God informs Moses that they are to gather only what they need each day except for on the sixth day, when they can gather double for the next day, the Sabbath. He also tells them to only gather what they need for the day.

You may also remember that some, disdainfully, decided to disobey God. They tried to hold over the manna from Tuesday to Wednesday. Sure enough when they got up in the morning to eat that bread, it was full of maggots that nobody wanted to eat. However, if we only think of manna as a physical element, we’re going to miss the bigger point that manna also fulfilled a spiritual need. God wanted them to learn that He really cared about them and would provide for them.

They’d already missed that point by demanding from Him what they wanted. Now that He was graciously giving it, He wanted them to understand who He was. He also wanted them to understand what He wanted. In Exodus 16 He tells Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out

each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.”

Unfortunately they failed that test. But He still didn't give up on them. He makes it very plain in Exodus 16: 12 “Tell them, at twilight you will eat meat and in the morning you will be filled with bread.” And what are they to learn from this? Here it is, “Then you'll know that I am the Lord your God.” God wanted their obedience and this was their test.

In Exodus all receive according to their need. In our culture that's not always true. In fact, in our culture, the message is often that you grab as much as we can. I have to confess my own sin on that. We're all dealing with supply chain problems these days.

There are times when I go shopping and I see something I've been wanting. Suddenly, several jars or boxes of it will appear on a shelf. I could just take the one I need, but I'm afraid. I'm afraid the next time I want it, it may not be there so my sinful self says load them all in my cart. I try to justify myself and rationalize it.

We all do the same thing. What we're really doing is sinning, we're forgetting that God says He will provide exactly what we need. If we take more than we need, we're revealing our doubt in God and God Himself. That's not how God wants you or me to be.

He has blessed me generously. He wants me to give thoughtfully so that all may be satisfied. He wants all of us to remember that our neighbor needs to be loved just as we are loved. When we do that we receive joy. When we put our gifts and abilities at Jesus' discretion, He uses them to bless others. When we are generous we receive the joy of knowing that we are part of God's provision.

Daily bread has a much deeper meaning than just that we can fill our belly with food. It is a reminder of sufficiency. The question we have to deal with is, when is enough, enough? Will we trust that what God provides is enough and be content with it?

Daily bread even goes beyond personal contentment. When is enough so much that we don't seek more? When will we accept that when we have enough, it doesn't matter what others have. When we have more, it is an opportunity to

share, which allows us to be like our generous God, who has shared all things with us.

Bread is often spoken of as a staple of life. Jesus wants to be the staple of our life. He wants us to daily feed on Him and fill us with both physically and spiritually. He wants us to open ourselves up and pray, bread of heaven come and fill us.

We need to recognize that we have some control over that. If we only eat occasionally with Jesus, we will be starving ourselves spiritually. If we only see bread as a physical thing we will be starving ourselves spiritually. If we commune with Jesus daily, by taking that bread of life, His word into our lives, we will be fuller.

When we gather for the table we once again open ourselves up to his filling. As we receive the bread and the wine, the Body and Blood of Christ, by that reception, we proclaim Him Lord of our lives. When we see Jesus in everything around us we can begin to see the miracles of life differently. They're not just those fantastic things like raising the dead or feeding five thousand people, which are certainly miracles.

We can also begin to see things like waking up, a great meal, laughter and other such ordinary things, as being just as miraculous. They are like bread falling from heaven to feed our bodies and souls so that we fully enjoy the life God's given us. When we see every blessing coming from God, as bread falling from heaven, we can rejoice in them through our faith in Jesus.