

Our youngest granddaughter Abby, lives in Albuquerque. When she was almost 4 she visited us, and attended church with us on Communion Sunday. As Pastor Norm began the Words of Institution and broke the loaf of bread, Abby was watching with great interest. As Norm began distributing the trays of bread to the elders, she whispered to me, “Grandma, what are they doing?” I answered, “We are thanking God for Jesus.”

When the tray was passed to me, I turned to Abby and said, “This is the bread of life. Do you want to take it?” She said, “Yes! I’m starving!”

A while later, as the tray of juice was passed, I said, “Abby, this is the cup of salvation.” She took the small cup and gazed at it for a few moments; she took a tiny sip; and then another, savoring the taste of it. She sipped and sipped, wanting the small amount of juice to last!

When she had finished, she looked at the empty cup and softly said, “Thank you, God, for Jesus.”

*The huge crowd of Galilean people are hungry, too – they have been following Jesus for days, watching him perform many miracles. They are near starvation and yet they follow – in hope of another sign. Then, on a grassy slope next to the Sea of Galilee, Jesus provides a satisfying meal for them – it is a miraculous meal, enough to feed all 5,000.

The love and generosity of God is shown in this story, a God who desires to give us more than we will ever need. The followers of Jesus are certainly happy for this meal, and they keep watch on Jesus, hoping to follow this man longer, to see what next might be in store for them...

Like baby ducks following the mama duck, they recognize a generous provider – but they do not see the miracle meal as a sign. They recognize physical hunger, but they are puzzled over the idea that somehow, there is another type of hunger, and a food that sustains it.

Jesus reveals the grace of God by saying that they should be looking for spiritual food, which will nurture not their bellies but their souls, and through faith, bring them to eternal life.

Jesus further reveals that the Son of Man will be the giver of this food. But again, the people fail to understand, so they ask him,

*“What work must we do to earn this food that gives eternal life?”

And even though they have witnessed many miracles leading up to this moment, they still do not “see.” “Give us a sign,” they say; “What work will you perform to prove this to us?”

*They miss the point -- that eternal life is a gift from God; they assume they must achieve this gift by working for it.

They point out the manna from heaven that Moses gave their ancestors in the wilderness, but Jesus responds that the manna was from God, not Moses;

*and that this true bread that gives life to the world will also be from God.

And of course, the crowd wants it!

Jesus explains to them that the practice of faith, is the “work” they must do; for by practicing faith, they are truly fed.

When Jesus reveals, “I AM the bread of life,” the Galileans do not recognize Jesus for who he really is; they still see Jesus as the son of their neighbors, Joseph and Mary. They declare that they “know” who Jesus is!

Today, we know of Christ’s redeeming act on the cross and can see Jesus more clearly. We are more fully informed, and yet we still experience the hunger for the full knowledge of Christ. We also look for signs of assurance before we are willing to abandon ourselves,

submit to God with complete trust and
fully commit to a life of unbridled faith.

*It is this starving for the Spirit of God that compels us

to practice full faith and commitment.

It is this yearning hunger that Christ promises to alleviate.

The trust and faith of small children is unassuming and uncomplicated. Abby, a “starving” child of God, *sees the loaf being broken with hope rising in her heart that she will be fed.

Abby trusts because she has learned to trust her parents, who love and provide for her. She accepts the mystery of The Lord’s Supper simply, with her eyes and heart open wide.

We, too, are God’s children, starving for the bread of heaven --

but we are more assuming, and our lives more complicated. We starve our faith with the worries of earthly life –

with our eyes shut tight to the spiritual food that really matters
and our eyes open wide to food that perishes.

The Galileans eagerly say, "Give this bread to us!" but they assume it is belly food. It is so much more than that! It is the gift of Jesus himself; but the gift is only fully received when their hearts are prepared to receive it.

Today, we are in a wilderness.

Corruption is all around us:

We sin.

We test God with our selfish complaints.

We fail to acknowledge God's power to provide;

we believe we do it all by our own power, and

we want it all!

Our cravings are selfish, and threaten our trust in God.

In a country that enjoys abundance and privilege far more than any other place on earth, we are distracted by all the shiny, material possessions that are available to us.

In our minds, wants have become needs.

How do we find our Spiritual Source amid all the distractions in our lives?//

Sometimes, going through the motions of church is like using Jesus just to fill our stomachs; but if we seek Christ in pure joy and curiosity,

we will find where Christ is working to bring new life, discover who Jesus really is,
and receive the bread that lasts.

Abby gladly accepted the tiny piece of bread that somehow satisfied her for the time being.

*By the time the cup was offered, the moment had become a spiritual act for her. She tasted, and experienced for herself this wonderful mystery of faith. And finally, she thanked God for his goodness. God had given her the bread she craved, and it became spiritual food.

Abby's journey of faith has just begun. Most of us have been on our journeys considerably longer; but we can still savor the gifts of God through child-like eyes, that are wide-open in faith.

God bids us to do personal soul searching and ask not: “
What do I want from Life?”—but
“What do I need for Life?”

Our need is to be blessed by the essence of Christ that feeds us till we want no more;

And when we are filled to overflowing with the grace of God,
We collect the leftovers, for the gift is too abundant to contain!
We savor it, as Abby did; but we are also compelled to share.

Abby is now seven years old. We visited her last week, and she told me that her first-grade class was reading a biography of Louis Braille, the man who developed the alphabet system for the blind.

I said, “Isn't it interesting to learn about a person who makes a difference in so many lives?”

Abby answered, “Gramma, you have made a difference in my life.”

All I have done is love her with all my heart!
My love for one little granddaughter has made a difference,
and I hope that all my grandchildren feel the same.

Isn't this what we all live for – to make a difference in another person's life? There is no greater gift to oneself – than to be God's vessel of love spilled out, and to discover the very essence of who we really are.

*God bids us to do the work of faith,
so that we can truly see Christ,
and live to bless others.

The Lord's Supper brings hope of spiritual renewal to each of us and reminds us that we are a people of promise. Christ, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, invites us to this Table in ***astounding love, grace, and generosity**. We do not want to miss the meaning of this incomparable gift, that binds us to the very heart of Christ.

***Come! Taste, and See that the Lord is good!**