

## **“I Am The Bread Of Life”**

**Naom Ben Yossef, the curator of the exhibit on “Bread: Daily and Divine” in the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem once said that “Bread is life. It symbolizes a multitude of things from fertility, to plenty, to civilization itself.” Maggie Glezer in an article on “A Blessing of Bread” said: “Our sages wrote that bread is so complex a creation that man could never have thought of it alone. Bread represents God’s care taking of us.” And each of us knows that bread throughout the age has been known as the staff of life. Jesus said, I am the Bread of Life.**

### **I. Jesus as the Bread of Life**

**The sixth chapter of St. John’s gospel begins a discourse on bread: the feeding of the five thousand; walking on the Sea of Galilee; teaching about the Bread of Life; the narrowing of the company of the faithful; a warning about the betrayal of Jesus from within the inner circle; awe and fear by the disciples; a confession and the radical departure of those who could no longer walk with Jesus. This chapter begins one of the most fascinating explorations of the person, power, and purpose of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate son of God and the Bread of Life. It embodies: the providence of life giving bread; the Eucharistic sharing; a connection to the Passover meal in Egypt and the manna and quail in the wilderness; a solidarity with the sacrificial and atoning death of Jesus at Calvary and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet at the end of the ages. In it the love, power and providence of God are clearly remembered, displayed and reinforced.**

**At once you and I are transported to the Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1) where we experience stuff, manna in the morning left after the dew lifts. Our camp is flooded with quail in the evening. And with our company, we eat our fill for the next forty years. There is enough! Again we are taken to a mountain on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. A famished group of followers of Jesus need bread. Out of five barley loaves and two fish is provided enough to feed the multitude. There is enough. In God’s time (kyros), we are taken to Isaiah’s mountain at the end of time and provided “*a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of wine well refined...and the veil that is cast over all the nations will be lifted forever,*” Isaiah 25:6,7. The love, power and providence of God are clearly displayed in all of these as well. There is enough.**

**In John 6, Jesus on a mountain in Galilee reminds us of Moses on Mt. Sinai. His compassion and feeding of the five thousand are reminiscent of God’s providential care for the children of Israel during their forty-years wandering in the wilderness. There the people murmured against Moses and against God as they clamored for food and drink. Here the multitude does not have to ask for food. Jesus provides it voluntarily. There manna and quail were provided from the heavens. Here the initial provision of five barley loaves and two fish was discovered by Andrew amongst the modest means of a little child in their midst. In each case stuff was provided from elements in nature and from their surroundings. Do you not understand? There was enough!**

**Jesus asked Philip where bread could be purchased, knowing all of the time what he was going to do. Andrew found a boy with small provisions. Jesus had the people to sit down. Then, Jesus administers the fourfold Eucharistic actions. He took the loaves, broke them, blessed them, and fed the multitude. The end result was that they ate their full and**

had twelve baskets full left over. What was the significance of the twelve baskets full of left overs.

Here, I believe, is a parable about the abundance of God's bounty. It is a wonderful sign of God's providence and the sharing of abundance out of God's bounty, demonstrated by the provisions of a small child. The left overs were to be shared with the nations. We, in our time, could learn a lot about what God is calling us to do with the abundant resources of the world, a world, parenthetically, in which each day millions are starving physically and many are lost spiritually.

## **II. The Strange Crossing**

At the end of the lesson, the disciples moved from across the Sea of Galilee to the west side near Capernaum. They were crossing in a boat without Jesus, but he appeared walking on the water near the shore and they were afraid. They desired to take him into their boat for the remainder of the journey. But, he did not need their assistance nor their mode of transportation. Nevertheless, for his mission today, God needs our cars, church buildings, food and warm bodies for the expansion of his kingdom.

## **III. What Do We Go From Here?**

What can we glean from this story? The salvation saga is the story of God's actions among humans from the calling of Abraham to the final consummation of human history. Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, invites us to journey with him in that story. We here at St Barnabas' Episcopal Church, are on a journey upon a mountain of need. We are searching, praying and saving for your next rector. What from John's account can we learn? Among other things, I will suggest six:

- 1. God knows our needs before you ask. If we will let God guide us, God will provide the right person.**
- 2. In our prayers, profiling, search and financing, we are being asked to depend on the giver of the Bread of Life to sustain us.**
- 3. We, like Andrew, must look among ourselves for the five barley loaves and the two fish.**
- 4. We must bring the multitudes to Jesus and have them to sit down in the presence of God.**
- 5. We must let God take, brake, bless and distribute the Bread of Life among us.**
- 6. We are then invited to partake of the Bread of Life to our full, to collect the abundance left overs and to distribute it to the multitude of people among and around us now and in the future.**

## **IV. What Can We Envision For St. Barnabas?**

- 1. I envision an every member canvas, well organized with the whole parish involved, challenged and contributing. Over a potluck meal, I hear the speaker saying, "I have bad news and I have good news. The bad news is that we need money. The good news is that you are sitting upon it. It is in your pockets. The bad news is that we need warm bodies.**

The good news is that you know where they are and are to go out to them and invite them in.” They are in your families, among your friend and total strangers.

2. I see adult as well as children’s formation groups meeting at a time agreed upon. Perhaps it may take a readjustment of our Sunday schedule. But, there are several classes meeting in different locations and some from time to time come together as a committee of the whole for an exciting spiritual growth experience.

3. I see an expanded Youth, Young Adult, Singles and Couples’ groups meeting in the near future.

4. I see the formation of a Lay Healing Ministry that provides healing prayer and the laying-on-of hands each Sunday in conjunction with the communion, an expansion of the Lay Eucharistic Ministry and an Ordained Person for special pastoral calls until the new rector arrives.

5. I hear lively, diverse and lovely worship and music with different cultures and traditions being jointly celebrated from time to times.

6. I see a congregation that is bursting at the seams because our Welcome Wagon is extended once again to new comers, the Hospitality Committee welcomes them, makes them feel at home and our name and presence become known throughout the three river-areas of Greater St. Louis.

7. And I can imagine Jesus walking among us as we remember not to be afraid of what God does. Remembering too that Jesus has his own mode of transportation, source of provisions and timing for positive change. He will navigate the waters of our future as we partake of the Bread of Life. There will be enough for all. So, “I Wish You Enough.”

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“Recently, I overheard a mother and daughter in their last moments together at the airport. Standing near the security gate they hugged and the mother said “I love and wish you enough.” The daughter replied, “Mom, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. ‘I wish you enough too, Mom.’” they kissed and the daughter left.

The mother walked over to the window where I was seated. I asked her. “When you were saying goodbye, I heard you say ‘I wish you enough.’ May I ask what that means?” She began to smile. “That’s a wish that has been handed down from other generations. My parents used to say it to everybody.”

She paused a moment and looked up as if trying to remember it in detail and she smiled even more. “When we said ‘I wish you enough’ we were wanting the other person to have a life filled with just enough good things to sustain them.” Then turning towards me she shared the following as if she were reciting it from memory.

*I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright*

*I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.*

*I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.*

*I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joy in life appears much bigger.*

*I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.*

*I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.*

*I wish you enough hellos to get you through the final good-bye.*

**The man then began to sob and walked away.”**

**My friends, I am not leaving you this morning. But the Feeding of the five thousand reminds me of God’s love and abundance all around us. I wish each and all of you enough in the day and years ahead. Amen.**

**Addendum:**

**In John’s gospel, Jesus uses eight statements in which he said, “I am” followed by statements about himself (6:35, 6:51;8:12& 9:5; 10:7,9; 11:11,14; 11:25,26; 14:6 & 15:1,5). Seven other times, he uses “I am,” identifying with the Godhead (4:26; 6:20; 8:24; 8:28; 8:58; 13:19; 18:5,7).**