

Pastor Roy's Sermon from August 5, 2012

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Israelites are hungry in the wilderness. “How will we ever survive this pilgrimage to the promised land?” Moses, do something!” Moses talks to God. God promises food. God provides quail and white flakey stuff. The Israelites name it, simply, “What is it?” The manna appears every morning. At first, they are quite happy for it. Some take too much of it and it goes bad and smells. After a while, they complain for want of something new and tastier.

Manna is a sign for all of life. We receive what we need with gratitude, but hoarding brings a smelly mess. The lesson we can learn is that gratitude is much more sustainable than entitlement. Thank you is healthier than “I deserve this, I have earned all that I have, I can keep it for myself.” Who can earn the ability to get up in the morning and do anything at all? Is not everything we are. . .and do a gracious gift from God? Everything.

The Israelites came to think that they were entitled to manna. They stopped seeing it as grace—a gift to celebrate. Don't we have the same challenge? Daily our needs are provided—generally with abundance. Day by day. If we don't spend time reflecting on God's abundant goodness, we can lose our sense of gratitude. We enjoy beautiful weather, but it gets hot sometimes and we wish it were cool again. At times it rains too much or not enough. In some seasons of our lives we have more than enough work, in others we wish for more. At times we have friends galore, and at others we walk alone. But God provides both in abundance and in times of scarcity. If we only knew abundance, we would never appreciate it. If we only knew scarcity, we couldn't know that God provides. Faith filled prayer teaches us to accept both.

Faithful prayer is the way we work for the food that endures for eternal life. When John remembers Jesus saying, “I am the Bread of Life,” he is inviting us to think of Jesus as the One who gives us life, even as bread fills us with strength and energy. We could not live without daily bread, and we cannot live well without the wisdom and peace of Jesus, God's Son. John explains this by contrasting one kind of bread with another and the warning, “Do not concentrate on survival!” Believe in God's gifts. Believe in the one who sets people free with the truth of God's grace and mercy. And if you don't know what that means, than figure it out—because that's what really matters. Trust in the wisdom bread that never get's moldy and never runs out. As we build the foundation of our lives on trusting this creator/redeemer God, we will never get hungry—we will overcome.

Paul speaks of Jesus as the One into whom we grow as a community of faith. He unites us as one body—his body. We are one as we find him to be our source of strength and hope. He is our source. He is our bread. He is our manna. Jesus proclaimed justice and mercy and lived it because he trusted in God's provision. He could truly let it all go because God will always provide. No exceptions.

I believe this is the underlying truth for all of life--God cares for creation and we all have an equal share in this care. We are never abandoned. In happiness and sadness, in suffering and in comfort, in birth and in death; we, and all of creation, are held and known by God. All is good, whether it feels good or not. Prayer is the path to learning gratitude and discovering courage.

In praying we make space for God. For when we wait in the presence of mind boggling goodness we are changed for good. Healing and wholeness come to those who accept their place in creation--who receive the bread of life from God. Here is wisdom. Here is mercy. Thanks be to God. Amen.