

You are What You Eat

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Year B: Pentecost 12: John 6:35, 41-51, 1 Kings 19: 4-8

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ⁴¹Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴²They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” ⁴³Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

They say “you are what you eat!” Yesterday I bought a ready-to-eat chicken. Sure enough, I was ready to eat chicken!

They say “You are what you eat!” If one eats a lot of bananas will it make you go bananas? Or lots of corn will make you corny? (You don’t think these are funny? Boy, you’ve got a weird sense of humor!)

Our culture loves to focus on food. We have multiple choices of restaurants! We have regular grocery stores and specialty grocery stores that only sell meat, or cheese, or dietary supplements.

It seems each day there is another article about the connection between certain foods and how they affect our eyes, memory, and hearts. One can go mad trying to follow whether you should eat chocolate or not! But the doctors, the dieticians and data in clinical studies are increasingly confirming that we are what we eat.

At this point in John's Gospel, the crowds are still trying to figure out who Jesus is. They've seen him heal. They ate bread and fish on the mountain. But they are really hungry and He just keeps saying, "I am the bread of life."

Imagine how audacious that claim would sound?! Especially from the ordinaryⁱ boy they all know. 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?' They watched Jesus grow up. Their kids played ball with Jesus. How can He even dare to say, 'I have come down from heaven?'

I'm guessing we've all had that same experience. Ordinary kid in elementary school. He was the class clown and got average grades. We return for a reunion and turns out he works for NASA and researches stars and galaxies! We scratch our heads and say, "What?!"

The claims Jesus is making are craziness! Whoever eats me will never be hungry? He will raise people up on the last day? This is nuts and they don't want to hear it.

These folks allowed their own perceptions and opinions to get in the way of hearing God. We all can be careful not to ignore a message from God simply because we don't like the messenger. As we listen, we prayerfully discern what is of God and what isn't. But to blindly cast a message or messenger aside because of our own first reactions, or prejudices could be problematic. "Jesus? He's too ordinary!"

Let's talk about ordinary. We gather around a table. The Altar Guild has kneaded dough with their own hands in their own kitchens to bake bread in their own ovens. The wine comes from grapes in regular vineyards, often hand-harvested. The holy of God comes from commonplace elements. God dares to grace our table – infusing the divine into familiar bread and wine.

It's not hocus pocus either. You might know there is one theory that the phrase 'hocus pocus' came from the Latin mass. Catholic priests presiding at The Eucharist, would say the words, "*Hoc est corpus meum.*" The phrase means, 'This is my Body.' 'Hoc est corpus', said quickly, could sound like hocus pocus.ⁱⁱ

There is no magic here. Lutheran Christians profess that God is in, with and under ordinary bread and wine. For us, bread and wine, are not only symbols. Nor are they changed or completely transformed into Jesus' body and blood. Luther believed in consubstantiation. Con = together. Substantiation = substance. For example, a water soaked sponge. The sponge isn't the water. The water is not the

sponge. The two elements co-exist together. God is in, with and under the elements of bread and wine. Jesus the bread of life.

This human being, Jesus, became incarnate for us to provide food for our earthly journeys and eternal food for Life.

In the First Lesson, the prophet Elijah seeks a safe place, escaping from Queen Jezebel who wants him dead. He know he can't be found, but food is sparse. A messenger of God provides food in his time of need. After filling his stomach twice, Elijah travels for forty days and forty nights.

This is a good reminder that many people seeking shelter or safety need us to be messengers of God to fill their stomachs. There is no need for fancy meals. Ordinary peanut butter, tuna, milk and raviolis will fit the bill. God provides the food and uses us to get it to their tables. We are God's hands to feed the world.

"I am the bread of life! Whoever eats of this bread will live forever."

What is this eternal life that Jesus speaks of? Does it arrive only after we pass away? No. The life that Jesus offers, begins now. It begins in our hearts as we turn over our minds, our wills, our understandings to God who loves us intimately. In the middle of earthly problems and challenges, God brings a peace that passes all understanding. Eternity begins now when we live in abiding relationship with Jesus. Forgiven. Freed. Loved.

A First Communion student whose church did not commune children, sat through the learning session on the meaning of Holy Communion. The class was told they would be able to eat a wafer and taste the wine just so they could know what to expect once the moment came. No Words of Institution were spoken over the elements.

As the pastor came to one boy, he looked up and said, "I've been waiting for this my whole life!" Nine years old. His expectation was palpable.

Jesus neighbors and the crowd that followed Him, didn't know it. But they'd been waiting for Jesus too! Waiting for release from oppression. Waiting for enough food to fulfill their hunger. Waiting and waiting for the promised Messiah, the One to deliver them in this life and the next.

Jesus tells them, in so many words, ‘You are what you eat!’ Today, we ordinary humans will feast on the bread of eternal life. It’s a meal not full of calories, but promises. Promises of forgiveness, real presence and eternal life.

You may have heard of mindful eating. Mindful eating means one can slow down to chew, swallow and really taste the flavors in our mouths. This morning, as we come to Holy Communion, let us partake of it mindfully. Let us remember the promises these ordinary elements hold. Let us be mindful that God dares to grace this table with the food for eternal life – both here and in the hereafter. Taste and see the Lord is good! Amen!

ⁱ <https://www.davidlose.net/2015/08/pentecost-11-b/>

ⁱⁱ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hocus-pocus>