

Wesley United Methodist Church

August 2, 2015

“I Am the Bread of Life...”

John 6:24-35

This morning we want to talk about food. That’s a relevant subject for most of us. The two biggest sellers in any bookstore, according to Andy Rooney, are cookbooks and diet books. The cookbooks tell you how to prepare the food and the diet books tell you how not to eat any of it. Orson Wells once said, “My doctor has advised me to give up those intimate little dinners for four, unless, of course, there are three other people eating with me.” Some people refer to “the basic four food groups” as Big Mac, fries, a shake and a lemon tart.

Our subject for the morning is food. That’s a subject most of us know too much about. In one way or another, many of us are obsessed with earthly food. Think what difference it would make in our lives if we were equally obsessed with heavenly food, the food that Christ gives us. Jesus said to those who followed him, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger; and he who believes in me shall never thirst.” And again he said, “I am the living bread which comes down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my body.” What shall we say to this bold claim that the Savior makes? How is he bread for our lives? Could it have something to do with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper? A poll was taken of some Christian group and the question was asked, “When do you feel most a sense of being at worship with God?” More than 80% of those surveyed said they most felt a sense of worship during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. There is something about taking the bread and the cup that lifts many of us to a higher plane. Why is that? Perhaps it is because the bread and the cup touch us where we really live.

George Herbert once described an imaginary dialogue between himself and Christ. Christ is welcoming him at the door of his own house. Naturally he hangs back, aware of how sinful he is. Christ is quick to notice his reluctance and gently asks him if there is something he wants. Herbert replies that only one thing is lacking and that is a guest who is worthy to be welcomed here. “But you shall be the guest,” Christ says. “Me, with all my sins of unkindness and ingratitude? I can’t even look you in the face,” Herbert replies. At this Christ takes his hand with a smile and asks, “And was it not I who made those eyes and gave you them?” “Of course, Lord,” he says, “but I have misused them. I’m ashamed to be here. Let me go elsewhere.” “But don’t you know,” Christ says, “who it is who bore the guilt?” This so convinces him that he yields. “I will come in then, but I insist on serving at tables.” Even that is not permitted. This is how the argument ends: “You must sit down and taste my meal.” “So,” says George Herbert, “I did sit and eat.”

There is a part of each of us that knows we are unworthy to take the bread and the cup. Perhaps it is that very knowledge that stirs us. We may not understand what Jesus really meant when he said that we could not share in his kingdom if his body were not broken and his blood were not shed, but we know that whatever it means we are not worthy of it. And thus when we take the bread and the cup, we sense grace: God’s unmerited love for sinners. We are conscious in a way that we may not be any other time, that we are those sinners and God really does love us. That touches us deep down where we really live. Perhaps, also, it is because when we take the bread and the cup we do it as his family. He allows us to reach out and touch one another. Or, perhaps it is because in the act of the Lord’s Supper we are able to reach out and touch Christ.

In this sacrament God comes to us spiritually and physically and touches us and says, “I love you.” No wonder the sacred meal moves us like it does. Truly Christ is the bread of life. He alone touches us and satisfies our deepest needs. He alone allows us to reach out and touch one another. And at no other time do we come closer to touching him than when we eat of the bread and drink from the cup. In a world obsessed with food, he gives us the bread that is eternal. Take and eat and live. Amen.