

**Sermon – “BREAD FROM HEAVEN”**

**August 2, 2009  
Exodus 16:2-4**

Before I begin the sermon today, I want you children to help me do something.  
(children come forward)

Here are some pieces of bread.

I'd like you to take this out to the people  
and give them to the ones who would like some – until you are all out. OK?  
(children distribute bread)

What the taste of that bread in our mouths,  
we are ready to hear the sermon text from Exodus 16.

**READ THE TEXT**

Moses faced the same question that is faced every day by  
every army... every school... every summer camp... every factory...  
every large group of people...

**WHERE DO WE GET ENOUGH FOOD TO FEED  
ALL THESE HUNGRY PEOPLE?**

My son works for Google in Mountain View, California.  
The company bosses made a decision to put a restaurant into every building,  
and the employees eat there free!

No need to commute off-site to lunch, or bother bringing a brown bag.

**HUNGER** is a human constant.

Whether they are religious or not, good or bad, children or adults,  
**EVERYONE GETS HUNGRY!**

Everyone has to eat...or die!

It was true in the Sinai Desert. And it is still true.

Just today, approximately 43,000 people died of starvation.  
43,000 more will die tomorrow...and the next day.

About 550 million people in this world whom are NOT starving to death  
are labeled as “permanently hungry and malnourished.”

That's probably hard for us to understand,  
for most of us are never hungry for more than a meal or two.

I noticed that you didn't fight over the bread the children brought  
a few minutes ago.

Didn't need to, did you? You are very well fed.

But there are other hungers. Deeper ones.

Hungers that propel teenagers to leave home,  
searching for something to fill their emptiness.

Hungers that drive successful people to leave their careers,  
abandon marriages and families...

There are hungers that hover like dark clouds over many older folks who ask,  
"Why am I still alive?"

and that pursue busy middle aged folks, who come home  
from a day of racing to meet schedule demands and ask,  
"Is this all there is?"

Jesus spoke of an emptiness in people  
that makes them "**hunger and thirst for righteousness**"

You know such hungers, don't you?

Then listen carefully to these words fro Exodus 16:  
**"I will rain bread from heaven for you."**

God answers human hunger with BREAD.

We are empty. So He undertakes to FEED us. To FILL us.

The Bible is full of references to bread –

normally made from wheat or barley, baked in clay ovens or over hot stones.

For the hungry Israelites, however, that bread came as MANNA,  
a fine, white, flake-like bread – sweet like honey-cakes.  
a bread the Psalms called 'BREAD FROM HEAVEN' provided daily in  
some mysterious way by God Himself.

It tasted GOOD!

It was PLENTIFUL too...

enough to fill a million or more bellies every day for 40 years!

Ah, but there was just one problem. It was also PERISHABLE!

What you gathered on Monday wouldn't last until Tuesday.

So every day, day after day, they had to gather more.

Isn't that the way it is with most of what we humans crave?

THINGS DON'T LAST...

Shoes and cars and houses all begin to show their age.

In the ten years we have lived in our nearly-new house, we've had to replace our garage door, our dishwasher, our stove and microwave, and our five-year carpet.

We've had dry rot in the garage, a leak in the bathroom ceiling, and a light fixture to replace in the kitchen.

It's especially so with FOOD. We call it "perishable."

If you pick berries in the summer,

you've learned, like we have, that almost everything we pick must be processed quickly, or it will rot.

Strawberries get soggy. Raspberries grow mold.

That MANNA FROM HEAVEN, too, had a limited shelf life, measured in hours.

The people of Israel got tired of gathering it.

Then they got bored with eating it.

IF ONLY THERE WAS A FOOD THAT WOULD LAST!

Something that would "stick to the ribs" eternally,

something that would never bore us, and never wear out...

not just a BODY FOOD, but also a SOUL FOOD

that would satisfy all those deeper hungers from now on!

Listen to Jesus, who knows the hungers in your heart:

**Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life. Truly I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you BREAD FROM HEAVEN. I am the BREAD OF LIFE; he who comes to me shall not hunger.**

Hear Him!

There is such a food....good, plentiful, and everlasting!

**I AM THE TRUE BREAD** says Jesus.

Which is to day,

If you are **HUNGRY TO BE LOVED**,

look at Him, who stretched His arms wide on the cross to embrace us

“While we were sinners”!

**HUNGRY** for peace of mind?

Hear Him: **“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.”**

He is our peace, who reconciled us to God and each other by His blood.

**HUNGRY** for purpose?

“Follow me,” he says, “and you will be my witnesses.”

Having been **FED**, we may in turn feed others

the message of hope we received.

Jesus doesn't **WEAR OUT**.

He is **“the same yesterday and today and forever.”**

He's **FAITHFUL**, not **FICKLE**!

Your failures won't discourage Him. Your doubts won't defeat Him.

He is the **FOOD THAT ENDURES** to eternal life.

So...what will you do with this food?

I little earlier this morning, the children brought you bread in a dish.

With the bread came an invitation... **TAKE SOME. EAT!**

God sent manna to the Israelites. With this bread came a question:

“What will you do with it?”

He was testing them to see if they would

take Him at His word, and obey His instructions.

Some did. They went out every day, gathered just enough,  
and trusted that there would be more the next morning.

Others didn't.

They disobeyed instructions. Tried to hoard an extra supply.

Later they complained that the BREAD FROM HEAVEN was “tasteless”  
and “worthless,” though they received it free  
and it kept them alive!

What will you do with the BREAD OF LIFE that is offered to you in Jesus Christ?

Will you receive Him thankfully  
or despise these riches you have come to take for granted?

Will you trust Him to be there again tomorrow, as he promised,  
or will you begin to worry and fret  
as if you were unsure He will keep His promises?

Will you share this bread with other hungry people,  
or keep it to yourself?

Like the MANNA, Jesus comes to us day by day, without fail.

He comes to us, hidden beneath the bread of the Sacrament  
and invites us simply,  
“TAKE AND EAT.”

It was in that very act, Luke tells us, that the Emmaus disciples  
recognized Him.

He comes as the unseen guest at our dinner tables,  
offering Himself along with the daily food we share as a family,  
and there He is received by all who will pray, and really believe it as they say it:  
COME, LORD JESUS, BE OUR GUEST  
AND LET THESE GIFTS TO US BE BLESSED

He sits at table with us as surely as He sat with the 12 in the Upper Room  
and the two at Emmaus.

BREAD He is. For all our Hungers.

**Feed your children, God most Holy  
Comfort sinners, poor and lowly  
O, thou bread of life from, heaven  
Bless the food you here have given.**

Now take and eat.