

Third Sunday in Lent
Sermon Text: Isaiah 55:1-9
Related Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Date Preached: March 7, 2010

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the living bread from heaven having come to nourish us. May we feast on your goodness and mercy that we might in turn feed this hungry world with the love you provide. In Jesus name. AMEN.

Following worship the youth have their salad bar. Everyone is welcome. If you have not brought anything, come and eat. If you have no money, come and eat. If you are hungry or thirst come, there is a place for you.

Not only do we as a church welcome anyone who wants to come and share in this meal there is another banquet we are invited to where the same offer exists. The prophet Isaiah bids the thirsty to come and drink.

The invitation the prophet offers is on behalf of God. It is an invitation to life and health in the grace of God. Not only does God offer such a banquet on the house, it is an invitation for us to consider our hunger. Let us start by considering our literal hunger for food.

There are times when I have opened the pantry door and stood there for minutes trying to decide what to make for supper. There are a multitude of choices. Then there are times when I've heard couples have similar conversations about where they want to go out to eat. Do you want a sit down restaurant or a buffet? Do you want Chinese or Mexican?

In those moments for me, it hits just how fortunate we are to have such choices. It is also a sober reminder that people in this country and throughout the world don't have a pantry to look in, much less a vast choice of options for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

This is what the law does to us. We are hit in the heart with the reality of our own sinfulness. In this season called Lent, we find ourselves with an opportunity to pause and re-examine ourselves, to see what God has done in our lives, and to reorient our life so that our ways may be more like the Lord's ways.

It is also a time to look at what else we hunger for in our lives beyond literally bread and food. In what ways are we hungry for the Lord? Must we be like the Israelites faced with the striking of serpents at our feet before we cry out to him? Do we wait until

hardships threaten to overwhelm us before we seek the Lord?

We may come to think in times of struggle that God is so far away. Yet it is in such time of struggle that God is near. As Isaiah reminds us, “Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Return to the Lord that He may have mercy and will abundantly pardon.”

In other words, feast upon the nearness of God. The Lord our God is as near to us as the cross we wear around our necks or pinned to the lapel of our jackets. God is so near because it is God’s intent for all his children to be fed with food for this life as well as the living bread revealed in Scripture.

The nearness of God is the crucified and risen Christ. He came not only to feed the multitudes with bread and fish, but to feed us with the gifts of God’s mercy and forgiveness.

We who are God’s children can stand forgiven by his grace only through the strength of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who calls, gathers, enlightens and makes us Holy, also leads us out into the world with hearts full of mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love.

The Spirit leads us to cry out and act on behalf of the poor who hunger for food. We have responded well in the past with drives to fill our food pantry, provide food and drivers (of which there continues to be a great need) for meals on wheels, and most recently to advocate through Bread for the World. But that is only one aspect of hunger we are called to address.

As the church, the body of Christ, our primary calling is to distribute the spiritual food of God to those hungry for God. So it is that we participate with camp Lutherlyn by sending our youth for a week in the summer and encouraging youth fest.

We provide the spiritual needs of all God's children through our Sunday school classes, Bible studies, and particularly through worship. Because for all our efforts, there are a lot of ways people can have their spiritual needs addressed. But the one thing the Church offers that can be provided no where else, is the gift of Christ body and blood, given and shed for you and for all who hunger. It is this food, this eating and drinking in the forgiveness of sins that separates us from all other groups. And it is this gift from God who bids us to welcome all people to come and eat. Come without money and without price. It is already paid for, by the host himself, Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.