

***A GLORIOUS MEAL***  
**Deuteronomy 8:1-3; John 4:4-38**

**(Read John 4:4-38)**

**Intro:** I'm sure you'd never have guessed it, but many good and happy memories for me revolve around food or eating. A family meal is something I look forward to a lot and they don't disappoint. Our Christmas party where we invite people from ABC and all around town has become a tradition, which this year has grown for 15 years. Its food and fellowship and its great fun. What I'm trying to say is, lots of great things happen around food.

Speaking of food, I have lots of favorite things – if I know I have a special dish coming up for dinner it makes my day. When Kathy and I travel to the Southwest I particularly anticipate both Mexican and New Mexican food – and there is a difference between the two. We generally have breakfast at the hotel or Bed & Breakfast we are staying and then the next meal we have is our evening meal. We carefully research the best place to go in whatever town is our destination that day. We do this by asking the locals where their favorite eatery is, and we have never been misled. I might also add that we NEVER miss a stop at Blake's when we're in New Mexico, and when we do, our vacation is complete.

Probably food means too much to me, but I look forward to a glorious meal with joyful anticipation. One meal that definitely means a lot to me is this one we will be sharing, yes, Communion is just such a meal. It's a sacred yet joyful and glorious celebration. When we celebrate this meal, we are gathering at the table where Christ and his disciples reclined, and we are also anticipating the day when he will again drink from the cup. You see, at that last supper before he was crucified, Jesus told his disciples *For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.*" Luke 22:18 (NIV) So the most glorious meal we will be the one we enjoy in the Father's kingdom because we will be in his presence. Until then we will continue to learn and grow as we come to meal that promises even better meals ahead.

Looking at both of our texts for this morning, and some others as well, I want to talk about what communion reveals. First . . .

**This glorious meal shows us the importance of remembering**

- In the text we heard earlier from Deuteronomy, Moses is reminding his people of their salvation history with, *Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years.* Deuteronomy 8:2a. The promise is this: as you follow God's commands you will live and increase – **but you must remember.**
- All too often we forget. About 15 or 16 years ago we took our youth group at Conoy Church to see the movie THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST? After the movie, we sat in the theater, almost wrung out by the brutality depicted in it. It is a vivid and graphic reminder of all Jesus went through for humanity – you and me. And the sobering thing was, the movie screen can only do so much to present reality, and I cannot help but think that it was even worse than what made us cringe and squirm in our theater seats. Because it was so powerful, the plan was to return to the church and unpack it all with the kids – which we did. I remember discussing the entire experience with my Associate Pastor who had participated and she asked me if I thought people would forget it. I replied I didn't think so and I don't think I have. But Pat had a point, we humans do indeed forget so quickly. Let's NOT forget what Jesus went through for us.
- In fact as he concluded the Last Supper it says that Jesus . . . *took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."* Luke 22:19 **DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME!** That is pretty direct, and it's very specific. Don't forget what he did. As you eat the bread (his body) and drink the cup (his blood) I pray it refreshes our collective memories of his sacrifice and his mission.

**This glorious meal helps us to know what really nourishes us**

- The Matthew account of Jesus's temptation in the Wilderness reads *The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'* Matthew 4:3-4. Jesus told Satan to stuff it and then he quotes our text from Deuteronomy, *He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not*

*live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.* Deuteronomy 8:3. True nourishment comes from a higher shelf – it comes from God himself.

- The woman that Jesus met at the well in our text from John is looking for nourishment for the wrong reasons. She is “lookin’ for love in all the wrong places” She’s been married so many times and she still hasn’t found what she’s looking for. The awesome thing is, by divine appointment, she’s looking at the One whom she’s been searching for all her life and it’s not an empty romance or an exciting sexual tryst both, which are temporary and unfulfilling. This man in front of her is the Messiah – the deliverer – the one who would “*explain everything to*” her (John 4:29a) her – and here he is – right in front of her – offering her the water of life (John 4:10-14) that will prevent her from ever thirsting again. His promise was not a temporary fix but a forever satisfaction. The wonderful thing about this interchange at the well is that it wasn’t just for the Samaritan woman or for a different age or for someone else...

**This glorious meal we’re going to celebrate today helps US to worship in spirit and in truth because it brings us into the presence of the Messiah**

- Communion represents a permanent fix. The bread and cup represent a body broken and blood that flowed for us. And while the world doesn’t understand, that is what makes it a glorious meal. For this reason, while this is a wonderful celebration and a joyful occasion, it is, nevertheless, not a time to be taken lightly and casually. To do so is to empty it of significance. That’s why children should not take communion until they have committed their life to Christ and have a grasp of what the meal represents.
- So, even though this is a celebration, it is not a party in the sense of a loud and boisterous time. It is a sacred celebration where we remember. We remember so as not to forget. I’m not being silly – we must not forget what Christ went through for us. That’s why we have communion. Jesus said, “*Do this in remembrance of me.*” So that’s what we’re doing.
- For that reason, we are better able to . . . *worship in spirit and in truth.* John 4:24b. In Communion we are celebrating Someone we actually know. Jesus told this Samaritan woman that she and her people were worshipping *what they do not know.* (John 4:22). In other words, their worship was empty and after coming away from it they were still hungry and empty. Not so with the one true God. Jesus told his disciples later in John, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” John 14:6. In other words the only way you can come to worship and go away filled up and nourished is to know whom you are worshipping. Do you know him? Or is your worship like coming to a meal with the nutritional value of Styrofoam?
- Recently, maybe on our vacation, Kathy and I went into a restaurant that had a prominently displayed sign that told customers to not eat food purchased elsewhere in that particular restaurant. Kathy looked at the sign and asked incredulously, “*Who would do that anyway?!*” And I thought, “*Well, me, for one.*” And I recalled that just one of the times I’d done it was when I met with my friend Barry for lunch at a Subway roughly halfway between our two churches. Because of inclement weather our usual meeting place was closed so we met at Subway so that he could get a sub. I on the other hand, had my lunch with me, as we usually did when we met and being the tightwad that I am, I proceeded to eat it at Subway. I took my own lunch to a restaurant – I’m glad Kathy didn’t know. But since I’m on the subject, let me ask, how many of you bring your own lunch to this meal?
- How many of you come to worship on Sunday morning with your own bag of goodies, like the frustrations of the past week and the cares of coming days, and you proceed to consume them? All this, when there is a glorious meal laid out for you if you would just concentrate on worshipping God. One of the blessings of worship is the opportunity to leave your own agenda and concerns and focus on the way, the truth, and the life. If you don’t, you will go away hungry and empty. Worshipping in spirit and truth is focusing on Him and not on self. As we do we’ll find . . .

**This glorious meal strengthens us to do his will until he comes**

- Why do we eat? I mean when we get right down to it, what is the real physiological reason we eat food? We eat to have energy to function. If we’re eating the wrong things we don’t function well, and if we’re eating Styrofoam, we will cease to function – we’ll die of lack of nourishment and poisoning.

- Worshiping in spirit and truth and, as part of that worship, coming to the table of communion, gives us the nourishment we need for the rigors of doing God's will. No longer are we doing our will – we are doing his will – we are following the lead of the one who told His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, . . . *yet not my will, but yours be done.*" Luke 22:42
- A big part God's will is to bring people with us to the table. Look at the concluding verses from our text from John again, *Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.*" . . . John 4:35-38.

**Conclusion:** The harvest is ready ABC. **This glorious meal is to be shared with a hungry world – look! They are hungry now!**

- Did you know that June is designated as LGBT Pride Month? All month long there have been Gay Pride parades in cities across America. People are still looking for love in all the wrong places.
- I sat with a pastor the other day he told me about the burgeoning need for foster families in just Ashland County alone (the need is also nationwide). Where there were about 80 children in need of foster homes 18 months ago, there are now over 180 children in the system. The main cause of this epidemic is heroin.
- People are looking for relief in all the wrong places. Obesity is an expanding problem (pun intended) in the USA – people like me, who struggle with it, are looking to fill a void in their lives that can only be satisfied by the love of Jesus. People are hungry for a better way. Jesus can fill the void and, ABC, we are the sowers.
- Let's show a hungry world that *Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.* Deuteronomy 8:3b, Matthew 4:4. We are his mouthpieces. As we come to this glorious meal today let's recommit every aspect of who and what we are to Christ. Amen.