

**SERMON: "YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT"**  
**TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT EXODUS 16:9-12, 31-35**  
**NEW TESTAMENT MATTHEW 14:13-21**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We know one of things you are looking for in your leaders is good stewardship  
We know you expect that of our elders ... and of your pastors  
So let me give you an example of how frugal (even cheap) your pastors are

Starting this fall, when we return to using bread with communion  
(not just the little containers with juice and bread), we will have  
the worship committee and other volunteers preparing the elements.  
Dating back to the COVID shutdown, however, the pastors have been  
the ones getting the bread we break and the juice we pour

Johnny found a four pack of small loaves that we kept in the fridge  
We used bread from that four pack three months in a row  
Johnny led that portion of the service two months and used two loaves  
I did so the third month ... noticed a few green spots on the third loaf  
Turned them to face me so you wouldn't see them as I broke the bread

We didn't try and use that last one a month later. Tossed it  
We have a fresh, relatively fresh loaf – the first in the four pack for today  
We need better bread when we are going to talk about bread

Moving on from our series on sermons in stained glass,  
we turn to the lectionary passage ... and the story of Jesus  
really stretching the budget by feeding 5000 + with just five loaves  
and two fish (or as one preacher I heard say, 'He fed over 5000 people  
with a Captain D's value meal and an extra order of biscuits.'

So let's talk about bread, how bread is featured in this story  
Thanks to the work of some good scholars, I'd suggest three different types  
of bread are included here. Matthew wants us to see all three types  
Not the bread with green spots ... three far better images  
unleavened bread, daily bread and communion bread

I'll focus on the first two examples in the sermon, the third will be evident  
when we celebrate communion. The language used here when Jesus  
feeds 5000 + people, language of bless and break and give is repeated  
when he shares a Passover meal with his disciples  
and gives us this sacrament and the words we use – bless, break, give

## BREAD OF FREEDOM

When we think of the bread blessed broken and given in this story  
We can think ahead to the bread of communion ... And we can think back  
to unleavened bread, the bread the people of Israel took with them when God,  
through plagues and Passover liberated them from slavery in Egypt.  
When slaves finally get a chance for freedom they don't wait  
for their bread to rise. They leave quickly.

The way Matthew tells this story, he wants them to remember their story,  
the story of liberation. No, the bread that Jesus uses to feed 5000  
is not unleavened bread. But is, in many ways the bread of freedom  
Matthew hints at their history with two subtle references  
his original readers would pick up on quicker than we might

The first is the reference Matthew makes at the beginning in verse 13  
(and that the disciples repeat in verse 16) describing the location  
as 'a deserted place.' A deserted place would remind the Israelites  
of the story at the heart of their story, the Exodus. God led them  
out of slavery, through a deserted place and to the promised land.

That is reinforced by an interesting addition Matthew makes  
He says the crowd followed him (Jesus went to that deserted place first,  
he chose the location) and how they followed him ... on foot.  
Seems obvious. No ubers available. It is also intentional

That same reference to being 'on foot' is also mentioned in Exodus 12:37  
in the story that recounts the very beginning of their journey out of Egypt,  
right after that tenth plague. Where they started and how many went

Matthew makes these references to deserted places and being on foot  
to help jog their collective memory. To say 'This isn't just bread.  
This is a reminder of where you came from  
This is, like the unleavened bread of the Exodus, the bread of freedom

It is also daily bread. The Exodus is not just about getting out of Egypt  
The Exodus story is a story of God delivering them out of slavery  
And delivering them through those deserted places  
And delivering them ... eventually, in God's good time, to Israel

That's a whole lot of daily bread (an entire generation's worth of bread)  
The story from Exodus that is our Old Testament lesson is about daily bread  
about God providing our daily bread. You can't pack bread to last a lifetime  
The story is quite specific. It is daily bread, a gift from God each day  
You can't hoard it for later. You get enough day by day ... and on the way

## GRATEFUL FOR DAILY BREAD

Let me try and describe it this way. An example for people my age  
Do you remember Stuckey's, the restaurant out on the highway?  
It was about the only place you could stop and eat on the road, on the way  
That and maybe a Howard Johnson or a Shoneys.

This was before there were multiple fast food options (or Casey's pizza)  
at an exit coming up soon ... unless you're heading west from here  
Not as many choices going that way. My Stuckey's related point is this ...  
Maybe we have so many choices now, we've lost sight of what a gift  
daily bread is. Maybe we're taking for granted the gift of our daily bread

I admit it, I looked forward to a stop at Stuckey's (pecan logs)  
Or Howard Johnson's (orange sherbet anyone?)

On the subject of bread, any of you bread makers and bakers?  
Might we tap into your skill set on Sunday, October 29  
It is not the usual first Sunday of the month when we have communion  
But we are having communion that day ... start using bread again

We will be preaching on how the disciples devoted themselves to breaking bread  
And I'm asking for help in making people hungry and grateful  
I want the sanctuary to smell like fresh baked bread that day  
I think smell and taste help awaken a sense of gratitude  
And I want you to be grateful for bread ... for daily bread!

The need for daily bread is reinforced by how Matthew gets around to telling  
the story of Jesus feeding 5000 + people. He begins with their need.  
The crowds followed Jesus to a deserted place where he spent the day  
curing their diseases and probably teaching as well.

At the end of a long day, the disciples, being the practical sort,  
remind Jesus that it might be a good idea to send the people away  
to get their own dinner (dutch treat). It seems like a good idea,  
rather sensible. But Jesus had a better idea.

**Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them  
something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but  
five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me."**

Matthew 14:16-17

The line that sticks out in Matthew's version of the story is that line  
**"you give them something to eat."** Jesus challenged them  
And challenges us to do just that ... give them something to eat,  
to be grateful for our daily bread and to share it. How might we do that?

## SUNDAY SUPPER

The Sunday Supper Community Meal we share with the four other Presbyterian churches in this community is a great example of both Being grateful for our daily bread ... and sharing it, giving them something good (even a bit spicy) to eat I'm biased as one of the chefs. I think the food is quite good

I'd like to end this sermon with an advertisement for Sunday Supper I want to sell you on the good work we are doing ... AND on the need to get more people involved with that good work

First about how and why it got started

Six, seven years ago the local PCUSA pastors got together over lunch to do some dreaming and scheming. We thought it would be good to do some good together. So we asked around about community needs.

One need mentioned several times by several community leaders people working 'hands on' to help our neighbors, was that there were free community meal somewhere every day of the week, except Sunday So we planned and prayed (and ate lunch together more often) And we came up with the idea of Sunday Supper, daily bread for Sunday

We got started and were serving about 120 meals each week We did that by mixing volunteers from each of our churches It is not Cedar Heights one time, then Westminster, then First We do it together (one of the strengths of the ministry – togetherness)

We rotate different head chefs. I cook on the second Sunday of each month and on fifth Sundays when it is the pastors' turn. Used to be, shopping at the Food Bank, I could serve 120 people a meat and three (or more sides) for about \$35-40

That was before COVID shutdowns, rising inflation and political changes (particularly cutting SNAP benefits and raising work requirements for them) Now there is more demand on the resources the Food Bank offers Still working with the Food Bank, things are more challenging today There is less food available these days and it costs more

There was always chicken available (I like cooking chicken – the clergy bird) Now, we have to get our proteins sometimes at a local grocer Giving them something to eat now costs more

## **SUMMARY**

It also requires more volunteers ... so I am asking for your help  
We need more people to sign up, show up and help out  
We need people to prep. You can cut veggies or set the table  
We need dishwashers, people to help carry trays

We have several people who are actively involved. We need more  
More money for more groceries and more people to help  
We can and will find a way to use your skills to give them something to eat  
Also for families .... It's a good thing to do with your kids.  
Annie Rayzor is mighty good dishwasher!

Please sign up using the clipboards in the commons  
We especially need people to help on the Sundays I'm not cooking  
Lesley Johnson is our part time director and one of the cooks  
Her food is really good. This ministry is a really good one  
Especially good at treating our clients with respect and hospitality

I am proud of, and thankful for, this church's work in tackling hunger  
We have now been recognized as a Hunger Action Congregation  
by our denomination, the PCUSA. We are doing good work  
by being intentionally grateful for our daily bread  
by sharing our food, by giving them something to eat

And by not serving the bread with the green spots.