

Abundant Life in Christ
John 6:25–35 / Philippians 4:4–9

Still Medium-Rare?

People often say America is “a great melting pot.” A place where people from every culture melt together. Well... I’ve lived in this melting pot for 17 years, and let me confess: I don’t think I’ve melted very much. At least not when it comes to food. Every Thanksgiving, I am reminded that my heart and especially my stomach—still belong to Korea.

Turkey? I’ll eat it politely... but fork belly is still my best friend. Pumpkin pie? I appreciate the effort...but rice cake still wins. Mashed potatoes? Very nice...but rice is forever. Sometimes after I enjoy a full Thanksgiving dinner at someone’s home, I still go home thinking: “Hmm... maybe I will cook ramen.” So yes—even after 17 years in America, I am still only “medium-rare” in the melting pot.

But there is one part of Thanksgiving I enjoy like a real American: Black Friday. When everything is 70% off, plus an extra 20%—suddenly I feel like a financial genius. My Korean immigrant brain says, “This is stewardship. God approves.”

But Black Friday also makes me uncomfortable. So many of our holidays began with deep spiritual meaning... but now the message sounds more like: “Buy your wife a shiny gift and she’ll be happy. Happy wife, happy life.” And all the faithful husbands say, “Amen!”

But no matter how much we buy, something inside us remains hungry and thirsty. We still want more—more things, more comfort, more pleasure. And research shows that the more materialistic we become, the less grateful we feel. Even in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, people still feel empty.

That is why Jesus’ words today are so important. Jesus says: “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life.” And then He says: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

My beloved Asbury family, Jesus isn’t offering us a Black Friday deal. He offers us a new appetite—a new hunger, a new desire. Not for the things that lose their shine or fail to satisfy the soul, but for the things that truly endure. Jesus gives us a hunger for life, for grace, for love, for God’s presence.

And every time we gather at the communion table, we taste the bread of life. We taste the grace that frees us from always wanting more, more, more. And I see this grace at work in our church. I see it when you quietly check on someone who is struggling or send a card to encourage them. I see it when you joyfully prepare meals for our neighbors in need through the Food for the Soul ministry. I see it when you give generously—sometimes even sacrificially—to missions and ministries. Can you see these collection baskets? They’re already overflowing with generosity! These actions do not come from the hunger of consumerism. They come from the hunger of Christ. And those who taste the bread of life are the ones who truly change the world.

Rev. George Ogle

Let me tell you a story—one that captures what it means to hunger for what Jesus hungers for. [PPT] Rev. George Ogle was a United Methodist pastor from the Midwest. In the 1950s, he felt God calling him to serve people who were suffering and overlooked. That call eventually led him to Korea, where he walked alongside factory workers, laborers, and families living in deep poverty. He didn’t just preach compassion—he lived compassion.

During his years in South Korea, Rev. Ogle became known by many titles: missionary, evangelist, organizer, educator, “father of Korean workers,” and a strong advocate for the Korean democracy movement. Korea was under a military dictatorship at that time, and violations of human rights in the name of national security were common. In that environment, Rev. Ogle used his privilege as an American and became a voice for the voiceless.

Of course, speaking out was dangerous. In 1974 he was expelled from Korea for trying to save a group of innocent workers who had been falsely accused as North Korean spies by the government. On the day he was deported, one of the victims’ family members slipped a small gold ring onto his pinky finger so he would not suffer alone. As he was forced out of the country, he prayed, “God, You know these imprisoned people are innocent. Please save them.”

Sadly, those prisoners were executed. Only in 2007 did the government finally acknowledge it was a state-orchestrated judicial murder. When Rev. Ogle was finally allowed to return to Korea, he still wore that ring. He said that whenever he touched it, he prayed for the people he had served for decades. Why did he do that? Because he had tasted the bread of life. Because Christ’s hunger became his hunger. Because Christ’s compassion became his compassion. That is the abundant life Jesus is describing: a life where we desire mercy, justice, love, and grace—not just more stuff.

My beloved Asbury family,

Abundant life in Christ is not the life our culture advertises—bigger sales, better gadgets, or a busier calendar. As Paul reminds us in Philippians 4, the abundant life in Christ is a life rooted in joy, strengthened by gentleness, guarded by peace, sustained in prayer, and filled with everything that is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and worthy of praise. Even if we may face financial challenges, if we carry this quality of life within us—if we hold the hunger of Christ and the sincere desire to live as God longs for us to live—then we are already experiencing the abundant life.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, may this be a time to remember and give thanks for the abundant life God has given us. And I pray that you may also become a reason for someone else’s gratitude, enriching their life with God’s goodness. Amen.