

Jesus, the Bread of Life

John 6:24-35

People only want the bread from Jesus

Imagine that one day a Canadian goose flew onto your porch and the next day, it laid a golden egg. What would you want to do with this goose? [ppt] I am pretty sure that no one would want to make it a Canada Goose (jacket) out of it. Perhaps, we would want to build a cage in order to keep it. But a few day later, the goose somehow escapes from the cage and is gone. What would you do? You would search for it even though you knew there was little chance of finding it. Why? Because it's a goose that lays golden eggs! This is exactly what happened in our scripture reading today.

In today's scripture, we meet a group of people who were desperately seeking Jesus. When they realized that Jesus was not in their town, they jumped into their boats and crossed the sea of Galilee seeking him. Why? Because their goose that had laid a golden egg had just disappeared. According to the Bible, this story took place right after Jesus had fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Out of almost nothing, Jesus provided people with more than plenty to eat. It was an undeniable sign of God's provision for God's people.

Two thousand years ago, people generally suffered from food shortages and they had just met a man who was able to produce bread from thin air. They had finally found "The goose that laid golden eggs." They wanted to take Jesus by force to make him their king so they could continue to enjoy the bread that their king freely provided to them. This was why Jesus withdrew himself from that town and how the hide-and-seek game between Jesus and the people started.

They saw God's sign right in front of their eyes but they didn't really see God's wonder. They didn't praise God but they just wanted to get more bread out of Jesus. When people came to him, Jesus knew of their motivations so he said, "I assure you that you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate all the food you wanted." Their effort to seek Jesus was admirable but they did it for all the wrong reasons. Instead of seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, they just treated Jesus like an ATM machine that they could go to when necessary. They just wanted to get what they desired from Jesus.

We want to have what we like from Jesus

Many Christians today are like this. We desire what everyone else desire. More power, more money, more pleasure, more comfort, more security. [ppt] In his book, *Breathing Underwater*, Richard Rohr wrote, "Christians are usually sincere and well-intentioned people until you get to any real issues of ego, control power, money, pleasure, and security. Then they tend to be pretty much like everybody else. We often have a bogus version of the Gospel, some fast-food religion, without any deep transformation of the self; and the result has been the spiritual disaster of "Christian" countries that tend to be as consumer-oriented, proud, warlike, racist, class conscious, and addictive as everybody else-and often more so, I'm afraid."

It's sad but true. We desire what others desire. We want Jesus to solve our problems but we don't really want him to change us too much. If God granted everything you wished for, would you be happy? If you had everything you ever wanted, would you be happy? Maybe or maybe not. Economic prosperity, security and comfort do not guarantee happiness because happiness and meaning in life are strongly correlated with each other.

As you know, Juhee and I began gardening last year. We enjoyed the beautiful morning glories, so Juhee collected the seeds and planted them all around the fence in the backyard this

year. As we expected, many morning glory vines grew in time, and as a way of tending them, I watered them every morning and evening and sometimes fertilized them and, a strange thing happened. [ppt] As you can see in these pictures, our morning glories grew and covered the fence in green, but there were only a few flowers. I gave them more water, more fertilizer and more energy and love than I did last year but only their leaves grew, not their flowers. I didn't know why so I googled it. According to a website, "Soil that is too rich is often the reason for morning glories not blooming." I didn't know the richness of the soil and plenty of water could cause a morning glory not to bloom. A morning glory without a flower is still a morning glory but cannot really be a morning GLORY! It's like a life that has abundant material resources without meaning and purpose of life.

Many studies tell us that as materialism increases, feelings of gratitude and life satisfaction decrease. The powerful forces of materialism and consumerism have shaped our desires and what we want from God. Perhaps, this is why we are still hungering and thirsting for more while we are living in one of the most affluent countries in the world.

Christian faith is not about getting what we want from God. It is not about getting a rich or comfortable life. Christian faith is not about how to satisfy our greed by using God. Rather it tells us what we really need and what we need to desire.

Jesus gave them what they really need, the bread of life

When the people came to Jesus, Jesus knew why they were looking for him. He didn't blame them but he taught them what they really needed. "Don't work for the food that doesn't last but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you." (v 27) Working for bread is important but that's not all that is needed for life. There's more to life than having a nice job, high income, and comfortable lifestyle. There's more to life than just being happy. Jesus taught them a new purpose of life. "Don't work for the food that doesn't last but for the food that endures for eternal life." According to the Bible, Jesus is the bread of life from heaven. (32) Jesus promised, "Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

We eat this bread of life through the sacrament of holy communion. Eating is a basic human activity for survival. But eating something means that you become one with what you eat. You are what you eat! Because Christ gave Himself up for us... and because we eat at his table and drink from His cup, now Jesus Christ lives in us.

When the vision of Jesus Christ has become our vision of life and the dream of Jesus Christ for God's kin-dom has become our dream and life purpose, we will never be hungry! We will never be thirsty... because we will only desire what our Christ desires... and we will only desire our Christ, who is already with us, and lives in us. Just like Jesus Christ, we will dream and work for the kin-dom of God and for this purpose gladly share our lives with others. Many faithful Christians who have eaten this bread of life have changed the world and have brought life to the world.

4th God gives us the bread of life to share with others

A few years ago, I made a new Korean clergy friend when I visited Washington D.C. for a peace march. His grandfather and father were Korean Methodist pastors and he is a third-generation Methodist pastor. He didn't originally plan to become a United Methodist pastor but one day, he happened to see a Methodist church in Malden, Massachusetts, that had been turned into a bar. He said, "it was so painful to see a house of worship turned into a place of drugs and

prostitution. I couldn't hold back my tears. That was my moment of calling to be a United Methodist pastor in New England."

As an immigrant, he had to get a green card to stay in the United States. When he finally got his green card, his mother was elated and congratulated him. But a year later, his mother called him and said in dejection, "Your sister just got a green card... from Zimbabwe, Africa." It is very unusual for a Korean to get a green card for Zimbabwe. There are less than 200 Koreans in Zimbabwe and one of them is his sister.

His sister and brother-in-law were doctors in a renowned university hospital in Korea but they decided to do mission work in Africa for a year. That year became a decade. They could have lived a comfortable and affluent life in Korea, but they went to Zimbabwe because of Jesus Christ. When my friend asked his sister whether or not she would return to Korea, she said that she couldn't leave Zimbabwe because she had seen so many signs of God's wonders and miracles. Since she knew that God was doing something to save people in Zimbabwe, she could not ignore God's calling for her. His sister and brother-in-law left everything behind and worked for the people of Zimbabwe because they had already tasted the bread of life and they were filled with the joy and life that only the Spirit of God gives, and they wanted to share this bread of life with others.

I don't think that God intends all of us to be like them. No. I don't think so. But I believe that God wants us to share the bread of life that we have already tasted, with people around us. Our job is not to bake the bread of life. Just tell people how Jesus Christ fills our hunger and quenches our thirst. Tell people that the bread of life that saved us is also available for them. As we share the bread of life with others through our words and actions, we can also be the bread of life for many people who suffer from deep hunger in their souls. Eat this bread of life and be the bread of life for our neighbors. The Holy Spirit, the divine flame in us, will bake our lives to be life-giving bread of life. Amen.