

Pentecost 10 Year B
August 1, 2021
Grace Lutheran Church
Pastor Troy E. Medlin
Bread That Lasts

There was the rectangular island...where we ate most of our meals as a family growing up sitting on tall chairs to reach the high counter.... After that there was the hand-me-down table with so much character I inherited for my apartment up in Saint Paul....and now...there is the circular wooden table we got from my step dad that he got at an estate sale....for our place in Oak Park.....It's an antique but new for us....and we spend a lot of time sitting around it...Those are just a few of the tables...where I have gathered for a meal....sitting down hungry...and leaving filled... And, I hope to add....tables....in the fellowship hall at Grace...to my list... of tables where I come again and again...hungry...and leaving nourished....

There are so many tables..we find ourselves at throughout our lives....

Dining room tables are often some of the most *used* places in our homes....filled with so many memories....we gather there so often....at least for two or three meals a day... if we can....One of the more primal reasons we find ourselves around those and so many other tables so often...(the reason might seem obvious).....is that no matter...how full and nourished we are at any given moment....after any meal....no matter how expansive and filling and delicious that meal may be....regardless of how many courses have been brought out....and....recipes we have indulged in....given enough time....whether in a few hours...or the next day... we will find ourselves hungry again....searching out a table....and another meal...something else to satisfy our hunger for a little while longer... that is just how it works....

That feeling of hunger and the need to be filled is such a common part of our everyday lives that the average human will spend approximately four and a half years of our lives....eating.... That's a lot of food...a lot of meals....and a whole lot of time around tables...so much time spent....trying to be filled....

It should not surprise us then....that after the crowds had their fill of loaves and fish....and they had left that picnic for the ages on the hill in Galilee by the sea.....that even with twelve baskets left over....and more than enough for five thousand plus...to have all that they could have wanted and more.....that....just like all of us....they would get hungry....again.....because that is just what happens....given enough time...

We..like the crowds...find ourselves at table after table....searching out food....that will take the edge off that hunger....even if just for a few hours... yet we may not be one of the

7,000 people in Oak Park who are food insecure...or 760 people in River Forest whose tables are sparse...and worry about where their next meal is going to come from....still we are not always satisfied...even if we live comfortably...with pantries that are overflowing and tables that are filled... we still do not have enough...we keep searching out nourishment....but for most of us....the hunger that accompanies us is deeper than mere physical hunger....and leads us to the tables of this world...which are decorated decadently....decidedly and deceptively declaring to us the end of our hunger....yet...only deliver empty calories when all is said and done... And leave us wanting more.... Those tables set out in our midst are filled with things we are told will leave us feeling full and nourished once and for all...plates piled high...with heaping amounts of accumulating stuff....or money....or privilege or power or position....from these tables we are offered second helpings of success....the food of pride, performance, and a slice of moral one upmanship for dessert All of these dishes and more....promise us...satisfaction....they are each...enough....plenty....with our taste buds tainted by sin we dish up more and more of these entrees....thinking they will finally satisfy our deepest hungers...but we only find ourselves pulling up to the table again and again....once that sense of fullness has dissipated just a bit..as it always does....everywhere East of Eden....

Exhausted and frustratingly still hungry....like the crowds...we get up from those tables....and find ourselves searching for the Bread Man...remember him?...the one who has fed us in the past.... And just might do it again...We know about him....and so with the crowds....We spot him...on the other side of the sea....here...he offers something completely different....not just more loaves and fish or leftovers from yesterday's lunch...or anything like this world can offer....but the very bread of God that comes from Heaven like Manna that fed the Israelites in the wilderness....bread that if you eat it...you will never be hungry again...how can this be possible? Where is the table...where do we sit down...? We long for this bread!

And...from those picnic tables on the hill...across the sea....all the way through the cross...and the empty tomb...this one who is in himself...the only food that will ever satisfy our souls and bodies....has seen us....at all of those tables we occupy in our lives..and the food vying for our appetites... and comes to offer himself to us....on this day...on this corner.....as the one who finally really....satisfies all of our deepest hungers....with the gift of his own broken body and shed blood....which has become for us....food and drink...that we take into our bodies...at this table...here..... receiving the Bread of Life....Jesus Christ.... Himself....as pure gift we are filled up forever....with all of the forgiveness, mercy, love and gifts abundant that this God could ever serve us...after all...word has got around.....the Bread Man is a little over the top....he is the server who piles on..offering us more of himself than we could ever need or imagine....his grace never....runs out...it's is overflowing....here at the feast of the promised land...

And....as baptized people....those of us who have been crucified with that same Jesus Christ....you and I have died to a life of endlessly going from table to table...and the ways

of this world and its menus that promise fulfillment in a million things that always leave us wanting more...and we renounce them like Lilah and Cully's parents and baptismal sponsors will in a few minutes...on behalf of them and all of us.....and we have risen to new life in Jesus Christ....with our taste buds transformed in those waters....we now....take our place alongside.....Lilah and Cully...and all the saints at our family table....filled up with the only food that can grant us eternal life...both today and forever....walking from this table and out these doors we are turned outward...towards our still hungry world....all of those other tables that we spend so much time around....in our lives now are transformed because of this table....and we are set free....to use those tables in our homes and in our lives....and that we find ourselves around....not as places of consumption....but as places where we can live out our baptismal vocations....serving all people, welcoming the stranger, practicing hospitality, pulling up more chairs...expanding our table....and living our lives for the benefit of those around us...offering them...a sample of what we have tasted....here at this table.....in a world hungry for community...meaningful relationships...for a purpose beyond what is so fleeting....longing for a word of peace.....and to know they are forgiven.....searching for a bit of grace in a society that seems to feed on endless....crumbs of competition and revenge..... You and I.....from our own tables...whether they are kitchen islands...breakfast nooks....or something else entirely....have become evangelists.....living signs....the Body of Christ on Earth....witnesses to that banquet of the world to come....offering....them a seat...at this table....where the Bread Man is Guest, Meal and Salvation all by himself....

Here....we will never hunger or thirst again....we have found him...we have found Life...Life incarnate.....Life that lasts...and life that goes beyond the grave.... Life that fills us up more than anything else ever could....

.....Like the crowd our voices cry out: Give us *this* bread always....