

**“I’m Hungry!”**

Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron  
August 2, 2020 – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

**Hymns for Worship Video – August 2, 2020**

“Tell me the Stories of Jesus” #348 in the Book of Praise Vv. 1, 2, 3, 4  
*(3<sup>rd</sup> verse added from the Book of Praise)*

Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear  
Things I would ask him to tell me, if he were here  
Scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea  
Stories of Jesus, tell them to me

First let me hear how the children stood round His knee  
And I shall fancy his blessing resting on me  
Words full of kindness, deeds full of grace  
All in the lovelight of Jesus' face

Tell me about the disciples from far and near  
And I will listen among them, eager to hear  
Whose loaves and fishes did Jesus bless  
Showing the people God's tenderness

Tell me in accents of wonder how rolled the sea  
Tossing the boat in a tempest on Galilee  
And how the Master, ready and kind  
Chided the billows, and hushed the wind

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“Break Now the Bread of Life” #507 in the Book of Praise – All verses  
*(Words adapted to be consistent with the Book of Praise)*

Break now the bread of life, dear Lord to me  
As you once broke the loaves beside the sea  
Beyond the sacred page I seek You Lord  
My spirit longs for you, O living Word

You are the bread of life, dear Lord to me  
Your holy word is truth redeeming me  
Give me to eat and live with you above  
Teach me to love your truth for you are love

O send your Spirit now, dear Lord to me  
Touch now my blinded eyes and make me see  
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall  
And I shall find my peace, my all in all

*Alexander Groves | Mary Artemisia Lathbury*

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“All the Way my Saviour Leads Me” #699 in the Book of Praise – All verses

*(Words adapted to be consistent with the Book of Praise)*

All the way my Saviour leads me  
What have I to ask beside  
Can I doubt his tender mercy  
Who through life has been my guide  
Heav'nly peace divinest comfort  
Here by faith in him to dwell  
For I know whate'er befall me  
Jesus doeth all things well

All the way my Saviour leads me  
Cheers each winding path I tread  
Gives me grace for ev'ry trial  
Feeds me with the living bread  
Though my weary steps may falter  
And my soul athirst may be  
Gushing from the rock before me  
Lo a spring of joy I see

All the way my Saviour leads me  
O the fullness of his love  
Perfect rest to me is promised  
In my Father's house above  
When my spirit, clothed immortal  
Wings its flight to realms of day  
This my song through endless ages  
Jesus led me all the way  
This my song through endless ages  
Jesus led me all the way

*Fanny Jane Crosby / Robert Lowry*

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**Scripture Texts: Isaiah 55:1-5**

*“Come, all you who are thirsty,  
come to the waters;*

*and you who have no money,  
come, buy and eat!*

*Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without cost.*

<sup>2</sup> *Why spend money on what is not bread,  
and your labor on what does not satisfy?*

*Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,  
and you will delight in the richest of fare.*

<sup>3</sup> *Give ear and come to me;  
listen, that you may live.*

*I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
my faithful love promised to David.*

<sup>4</sup> *See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,  
a ruler and commander of the peoples.*

<sup>5</sup> *Surely you will summon nations you know not,  
and nations you do not know will come running to you,  
because of the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has endowed you with splendor.”*

**Matthew 13:14-21**

*When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.*

<sup>15</sup> *As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”*

<sup>16</sup> *Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”*

<sup>17</sup> *“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.*

<sup>18</sup> *“Bring them here to me,” he said. <sup>19</sup> And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. <sup>20</sup> They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>21</sup> The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children*

## Meditation

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I'm hungry! Oh the many times I have heard that phrase! As my sons have grown up they have said it for various reasons – not necessarily because they were actually hungry! They've said it to avoid chores, to stop the car on a road trip, because they were bored and couldn't think of anything else to do (I must confess to doing that myself!), and sometimes because they actually needed to eat. Now they just go to the fridge or pantry and help themselves, repeatedly. I'm pretty sure that's why Logan is over six feet tall, and still growing.

I'm pretty sure I'm safe in saying we've all said, "I'm hungry" and we've all heard other people say it. It's a pretty normal phrase. It's one of the best phrases to hear after a child has been ill and finally feels like eating again. Before a rather young Corey was diagnosed with Celiac Disease he had pretty much stopped eating altogether as he became weaker over the several months of testing. The day the words "I'm hungry" came out of his mouth again was the biggest relief I've ever felt as he dug into his new gluten free diet with great enthusiasm!

Really, those two words refer to a basic human need – food. We all need steady and healthy nutrition to stay well and strong. This is why it is so important, it's imperative, that the church does all that it can to help communities develop resources for food and nutrition, both locally and throughout the world. Presbyterian World Service and Development is the agency of the church that has at the heart of its purpose the relief and development of those communities where people have gone without for far too long, providing resources like wells for clean water, the planting and harvest of grains and vegetables, the raising of livestock, and education about sanitation, safety and basic nutrition for the building up of community health. The Gospel instructs and compels to care for the most vulnerable of people, and so we must respond with our best efforts. Too many have been hungry for too long without that basic need being met. We must work to change that – right here in Belleville and across the world. Our connection with the network of Community Gardens is one way we encourage and provide for those who need it, and those who want to help. Our support of PWS&D is one way we contribute to a global effort.

The two readings we have shared today both speak to the provision of nourishment, both food and drink. The prophet refers to the spiritual nourishment that comes through faith in God. The Gospel tells a story about hungry people being fed with the tangible nourishment they needed, and in the process their spiritual craving was also satisfied. It's yet another reminder that God, through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, provides what we need – for our bodies and our souls. We have all that we need from the One who created, nurtures, nourishes and sustains us by faith in God through Christ.

As I was thinking about these passages and reading what authors, preachers and scholars have said, I came across a reflection on the Gospel passage through the writer's interpretation of Babette's Feast as a parable. I have seen many references to this story as a metaphorical understanding of things like grace, generosity, selflessness and understanding over the years but have never read it. So this time I did.<sup>1</sup> It's a wonderful short story first published in 1958, made into a movie in 1987. Babette is a French woman who knocks at the door of two sisters who are carrying on their father's ministry in a small village in Norway. Theirs is a strict ascetic sect of Lutheranism that denies the community of worldly things and pleasures. Babette produces a letter from a former teacher for one of the sisters that

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<sup>1</sup> I read the Kindle ebook version of Babette's Feast by Isak Denison, first published in 1958, this edition published by Reading Essentials, Victoria BC.

asks them to take her in. Her husband and son were killed in an uprising in Paris, and she barely escaped. The sisters open their door and Babette becomes their cook and housekeeper, for no wages. Soon, the little ascetic community begins to notice something strange. Even in the basic meals she prepares, the food begins to taste better and there is a little money left over each month. But the people are harbouring grudges against each other. They criticize each other harshly and there is strife scattered within their fellowship.

Babette is with them for 14 years when a letter arrives to inform her she has won \$10,000.00 francs in a lottery. The sisters assume she will leave them and return to France, but Babette surprises them. She asks if she may prepare a celebration feast for the community as they acknowledge what would have been the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the sister's father, the pastor who had founded the sect. They reluctantly agree, as Babette has never asked them for anything since her arrival. She orders the ingredients from France and prepares a lavish feast for the guests, much to the shame of the sisters, who instruct the members of the sect not to think about the food so they will not enjoy it. They try, but it becomes apparent that is not the case during the meal. It is only after everyone has left the sisters discover Babette had been the chef at a renowned and posh restaurant in Paris, has spent her entire winnings on the feast, and plans to stay with them for no wages.

The commentary I was reading with regard to today's Gospel passage was a comment on the movie version of "Babette's Feast" and the author wrote this: "... it is a story full of grace. [Babette's] story of suffering and service is so suffused with amazing grace and extravagant, sacrificial love that she can be regarded as a striking example of the image of Christ... Babette, as a culinary artist and as a Catholic..., has intuitively seen the rigid asceticism with which the parishioners have imprisoned their spirits. In their denial of worldly things they have forgotten that God created and blessed the world... Christ affirmed the goodness of creation... when he used bread and wine to convey the deepest bond between himself and his followers. He often spoke of the kingdom as a great banquet. Babette's life becomes an image of Christ as the banquet host... Most central to this [story], however, is the theme of extravagant love and grace. Babette gives everything she has to deliver a group of people from their spare, colorless, and loveless, religion. She invites those who have chosen meagreness to a feast, to taste with joy the abundance of life."<sup>2</sup>

Isaiah 55 issues an invitation to those with little to no resources to receive what they need and to delight in what they receive. *You who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare (v. 2).*

God offers what we need without asking for anything other than our faithfulness in return. We have done nothing to earn it. We have done nothing to deserve it. We don't even have to ask because this is an invitation. We just have to accept it. That's it. We must accept it as a gift of God's generous grace. In accepting it, we profess our faith in what God offers. We can't very well accept something if we don't believe it's real. It certainly won't be of any benefit if it doesn't exist. But what God offers is very real. It is the basic need of spiritual nourishment that we need to experience peace and hope.

*Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?* This is what we do when we try to take spiritual matters into our own hands. We try to control how the Spirit is working, usually trying to make it do what we want it to do. Lord, by your Spirit give me patience, and hurry up! We sometimes look to worldly things to try to satisfy our spiritual longing, our dissatisfaction

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<sup>2</sup> From <https://readthespirit.com/visual-parables/babettes-feast-1987/> Written by Ed McNulty, April 8, 2013.

with how things are going. We redecorate. We subscribe to daily readings. We join more organizations. We purchase self-help books and join yoga classes. None of these is particularly hurtful, but they are limited in how much they can help. They cannot speak to our deepest longings. They leave us longing for more. But when our longings are satisfied in the deepest place of our hearts, they are satisfied by the One on whose name we call, and to whose invitation we respond affirmatively. All other things can fall away, expire, hit a deadline. The nourishment we receive from faith in God – the grace and peace that comes from nowhere else – is nourishment that really does satisfy our spiritual hunger, if we let the Spirit do what it does best: fill and change human hearts. And it doesn't have a best before date.

Jesus satisfied the hunger of a crowd of thousands of people, and he did so much more. He worked a miracle. He showed the power and glory of God with those thousands by simply breaking apart some bread and fish. Not only were the people satisfied with what they needed, they were shown something they had not seen before. They saw the grace of God at work in a tangible yet inexplicable way. The only explanation could be that this was the power of God working through Jesus to meet the needs of his people. I can only imagine what the disciples were thinking when Jesus said they could feed the whole crowd with the tiny bit of food they had among them. How could they do it? It wasn't possible. And yet, the statement came from Jesus, and by now they knew he could do things they didn't expect. So how would he make this happen? He would do it by giving thanks to God, and sharing what he had with others. He shared God's gracious power with those who needed to be satisfied. Not only that, but there were leftovers – LOTS of leftovers. What happen to them? The story doesn't say, but given Jesus' pattern, it wouldn't have gone to waste. It's probably a safe guess that the twelve baskets of food were given to those without any.

I encourage you to think about how Jesus has satisfied your spiritual hunger. I'm guessing he's done it through the people in your life – family, friends, colleagues. Through them he speaks a word of encouragement, a word of reassurance, a word of love. I'm guessing he's done it through silence – times of prayer, meditation on the Word, enjoying the beauty of creation. I'm guessing he's done it through the study of his Word, through prayer with others, and through the community of faith. I know he's done it through your faith in him, in the cross and the empty tomb, in the ongoing presence of his Spirit and in those unexpected ways in which his Spirit works. When we are hungry, Jesus feeds us with the Bread of Life. We don't have to tell him when we're hungry, but it helps to be aware of our need for the nourishment of his Spirit, and it is essential that we are open to what he offers by faith in God the Father through God the Son.

The invitation to receive the food and drink we need first came from God through the prophets, and is consistently offered at the table of our Lord. It is offered through the Word and through prayer. Be open to receiving it, and be satisfied of your deepest longings through Christ, the Bread of Life. Amen.