

A quick recap of where we've been . . . 2 weeks ago we heard about Jesus feeding the 5,000 actual bread. After that feeding, Jesus makes his way back across the sea and the people follow him. Jesus accuses them of looking for more loaves of bread and through a disjointed conversation, helps the crowd pivot from thinking about loaves of bread to considering the idea of living bread. Jesus continues to reference mana in the wilderness, as we heard this morning, as a helpful comparison to the bread of Life. As we continue on, his language becomes more and more Eucharistic: we heard him say the bread is my flesh. In next week's text Jesus will elaborate on this point, so I'm going to talk about flesh then. We'll turn now to this week's text, but first let us pray . . .

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be reflections of your word to us today, in Christ's name we pray. Amen

I asked the same question of everyone who has shared during the offering time - why do you invest time, energy, resources, etc to the life of CCG? Overwhelmingly, the answer has been, because of my life of faith and the participation in Christian community that brought me to this time and place. I'm guessing for each of you, even those we haven't heard from, there is a reason you have chosen Christian community. There are a lot of places to find community, but you are fed in a particular way here that is consequential to your life. There is something you receive here that you can't live without. You may not be able to immediately put your finger on it, but perhaps you'll have the question in your mind as I continue.

John's gospel is written later than the others. It assumes prior knowledge of the life of Jesus and his saving acts . . . and yet it still seeks to form us, to persuade us, to convert us even to a more profound belief and deeper faith. In this text Jesus is quite explicit about it . . . believe in me, he says, for I am the source of life. It seeks to take us from where we are to the next step on our journey.

Believing is a process . . . most of us have probably had a series of experiences through life that continually deepened our faith, rather than one dramatic moment of conversion. This shift is often the fruit of our practice . . . we gather together each week to come before God, to pray, to listen to the stories of our ancestors in faith, to hear about how the presence of God manifested in their lives and what they did about it. When we gather we are reminded that we are connected, we are one in Christ Jesus. We come to be filled up, to be nourished. We come to receive something spiritual and make it real in our very physical lives.

To believe in Christ as the Bread of Life brings us back again to God giving mana in the wilderness, where God provides food and is faithful in sustaining the people. Believing Christ is the Bread of Life affirms this relationship between God and God's people." This truth remains steadfast for all time – it was true for the Israelites, for people in Jesus' day and is still true today.

Christ says this in another way in the text with the phrase eternal life. Eternal life is one of those church phrases like Bread of Life that wash over us because we've heard them a million times before. We think about the time when Christ will come again to take us to be with God forever. Could mean that . . . the context of mana in the desert leads us to another possibility. Eternal life refers to the certainty of provision. Believing in Christ as the bread of life, as the source of our nourishment means that forever more we will live because we will have the sustenance to do so.

Christ is present in this place – next week we will talk specifically about bread and wine – but Christ is present in as many ways as we can experience the nourishment of this gathering, even in this strange way. One opportunity for deepening here is in acknowledging and affirming that God is here, feeding us.