

Bring the Bread
Acts 2:22-37

Many of you know that my wife Debbi's love language is to share something that she has made, usually something baked. It's not unusual that the dessert or bread literally comes out of the oven as we're about to leave. The aroma of fresh bread can fill the car better than any store bought car freshener. I've heard that if you are showing your home for sale that the aroma of fresh baked bread can actually be the difference between a sale and no-sale. Not sure if that is true, but that's what I've heard.

What is it about fresh baked bread that makes the mouth water and the stomach growl? Might it have something to do with the fact that it represents the essence of life? From the most simple of ingredients - grain, a little oil, and water mixed together, shaped, and baked or fried - life can be sustained. I'm reminded of the prophet Elijah. God caused the rain to cease for three years. Nothing could grow. There was no food. God lead Elijah to a widow and her son. She was about to use what flour and oil she had left to make their last meal after which they would prepare to die. Elijah asked for the food she would make, assuring her that there would always be flour in the bin and oil in the flask, and water in the barrel. The three of them survived on bread for over two years.

Fast forward to the time of our text and we can understand why the Feast of Shavuot (aka The Feast of First Fruits, aka Pentecost) that celebrated the harvest was so important to the people of Israel. How often in their history had the people of Israel experienced famine? It was famine that brought Jacob and his sons and their families to Egypt for food, which, as Joseph reminded his brothers, was how God provided. Enslaved generations later, God delivered them from Egypt and in the wilderness provided manna, bread, from heaven to sustain them until they entered into the Promised Land "flowing with milk and honey." Through times of great hunger,

God provided. And in times of plenty God provided. The celebration of Shavuot was not simply a thanksgiving for a harvest; it was a reminder to the people that in everything God provides.

In everything God provides. Isn't it awesome that on the very feast that celebrates God's provision, God provides the Holy Spirit to the disciples! And how is the Holy Spirit manifested? He shows up looking like fire that separates and rests upon each of the disciples. God took the grain of ordinary people, mixed them with the oil of his love and the water of his salvation, and added the fire of the Holy Spirit. You know what happened? They became Bread.

Later, at communion we will pray that the Holy Spirit will not only rest upon the elements of bread and cup so that they can be for us the body and blood of Christ, we will also ask the Holy Spirit to rest on us so that we can be the body of Christ, the Bread of Life to a famished people.

The disciples became Bread. And the aroma of fresh Bread started to waft out over the crowd. Oh, there's nothing like fresh bread to make the mouth water and the hungry stomach growl. And there's nothing like the Bread of Life to make the spirit crave and the soul growl for something to sustain life. The crowd sniffs the air, "What is that? What does this mean?"

Peter stands up and begins to hawk the Bread. He reminds them that what they are experiencing is exactly what God said through the prophet Joel would happen. The crowd would remember that Joel prophesied during a famine, brought on by locusts eating everything in sight. It was a famine that God allowed so that the people would turn back to God. God created a physical hunger to point the nation to their malnourished spiritual state caused by their sin. Joel's message was a call to repentance, a call to turn back to God. In it God promised to restore "grain, new wine, and oil to satisfy you fully" (Jl.2:19). God promised to satisfy their physical hunger; more importantly, God promised the satisfaction of the spiritual hunger caused by the separation

that sin causes. God follows the promise with a sign that satisfaction for sin was completed – the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Peter then serves the Bread of Life (**read text**).

Peter serves the Bread of Life by telling them that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the means by which God satisfies. Jesus' crucifixion was not a mark of shame or scorn, neither was it a tragic accident. Rather, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection all happened according to the plan of God. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are God's solution to the problem of sin in this world. Sin separates us from God. Sin disconnects us from the source of life. Sin creates a void that only God can fill. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection restore us to God. Jesus is our source of life. Jesus fills the void. Jesus satisfies the hunger. Jesus is the Bread of Life.

By now the crowd's spiritual stomach is growling. They want the satisfaction that only comes through Jesus. If Peter and the disciples had served physical bread, the crowd would have known what to do. They would have grabbed a loaf, ripped off a chunk, and started eating. How do you "eat" Jesus? How do you receive the satisfaction that God is providing? God in Joel had told them, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Jl.2:32). Jesus had told them, "Whoever believes in [the Son] shall not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn.3:16). Peter tells them, "Repent (turn back to God) and be baptized (physical evidence that you desire to be rid of your sin) in the name of Jesus (the Bread of Life) for the forgiveness of your sins (God's satisfaction is complete)." Just as eating physical bread requires that it be physically taken, so, too, the Bread of Life requires a personal response.

We still live amongst people who are starving, some of them physically but most of them spiritually. In their hunger they are looking for something to satisfy. But nothing in this earth will satisfy a hungry soul and a spirit that is growling. Only Jesus satisfies the problem of sin. He is

the true Bread of Life. Are you hungry? Come to Jesus. His life, death, and resurrection are the only means by which you can be saved. Take Jesus today.

Have you been satisfied? Have you eaten of the Bread of Life? The mission that Jesus gave, he still gives. Now it's our turn. God still takes the grain of us ordinary people, mixes us with the oil of his love and the water of his salvation, and adds the fire of the Holy Spirit so that we will become Bread, Jesus to the world. Think about that: we are the aroma of Christ. What do we smell like? Will others find their spirits crave and their souls growling because of us? Peter reminds us to "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Pt.3:15). We have the privilege of sharing the Bread of Life to a hungry world longing for hope. Together we can Out Live Our Life so that others can live!

Next week we will focus on just how we can waft the aroma of fresh bread, new life, to our hungry community. Today, make sure you are ready to receive and then serve the Bread of Life.