

What is God's vision for this church?

What is God's vision for you?

What are your hopes and dreams for Trinity? What can you do to make them happen?



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John 6:24-35

Jesus has miraculously fed thousands of people and now they want more. Today Jesus challenges them to find new meaning in miracles, in their history, in bread itself, and in their desire to do God's will.

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."' Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. 'They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Bread of Life

The crowds have been chasing Jesus. They had seen enough to know that they wanted more of it. More stories, more healings... and more food! As Jesus and the disciples crossed over the sea, the crowds followed, pushed

forward by their excitement. It wasn't just the free bread – it was that the bread came out of nowhere. No restaurants or bakeries in sight, and yet Jesus was able to produce a meal out of... where did it come from any way? Maybe, if they followed him, he would do it again. Maybe this time it would be a 5-course meal.

The people were still hungry and they followed Jesus, hoping to be fed.

Have you ever been hungry? That deep down kind of hunger that gnaws at your bones. The kind of hunger that never goes away because there is not enough food to fill your belly. Stranded in the middle of nowhere, with no food to be found and no one who can produce loaves and fish out of nowhere. Hunger... it's a problem that never truly goes away. There are over 800 million people in our world who are hungry like this, every single day. People who mean it literally when they say "give me this day our daily bread," because daily bread is a distant dream. We've seen the pictures of the children with bloated stomachs, lying in the sun. We've reached into our pockets and given money to help, and yet the problems continue. Drought, war, poverty combine to create a perfect storm of starvation.

And we don't have to look to Africa to find children who are hungry. Maybe not hunger to that extreme, because we are blessed with government programs that ensure that no one starves to death. But still, here in the wealthiest state in America, 1 in 3 people are considered "food insecure." Men, women and children – maybe our neighbors or members of our families... people that we might see every day... are going to bed with that gnawing, deep down longing for at least a bite of that daily bread.

The Children of Israel knew this hunger. As they stumbled through the wilderness, the emptiness and longing grew. The deeper into the wilderness they got, the greater the hunger. They were stranded in the middle of nowhere. Dreams of freedom and their own land dimmed in the light of the gnawing, deep down hunger inside. "Food," they said, "all I want is some food." And just like the rest of us, the hunger began to affect their attitudes and behavior. They turned to Moses in rage:

"Why did you drag us into this God-forsaken place, just so we can starve to death? Maybe we were slaves in Egypt, but at least we had food! Where is this God you are always talking about? We are stranded in the wilderness and we are all alone!"

It started with a few, muttering under their breath, but the mutterings and mumbling got louder and louder, until the people were fed on rage instead of bread.

Now God could have said, "You ungrateful wretches! I lead you to freedom and all you can do is complain? Why can't you trust the one who led you out of Egypt? I ought to leave you here to starve and find a better people to give my land to!" But of course, that's not what happened at all.

Instead, God responded to their needs. "I will rain bread upon you," God says. "I will feed you."

But there were lessons served with the manna. The people learned that God would give them the things they needed, but God also gave them just enough for the journey. They had to trust that the bread would be provided.

The people learned not to hoard the bread, it only stays good for a day. Tomorrow there really will be more... and the day after and the day after. Enough food to survive a journey of 40 years.

The people also learned the importance of sharing with those who could not gather for themselves.

In the bread that God gave them, they learned how to be the servant-people they were called to be. Trust God, care for each other.... Live into the greatest commandment of all - love of God and neighbor.

Generations later, the crowds who chased Jesus remembered the stories of manna, but they forgot the lessons learned. They grumble and moan, looking for free food. "Feed us again Jesus, and once we are full we'll decide if we want to keep following you."

So Jesus feeds them... just not with bread.

"I am the bread of life," he said. Not the kind of bread that fills your belly... the kind of bread that fills your soul, feeds your spirit. The kind of bread we really need.

This bread is free and available to all, but when you accept it there are responsibilities too, just like the lessons learned in the manna.

When we accept the bread, we are accepting the call to follow the one who provides it. Not to chase Jesus down in desperation, but to follow and learn... to be disciples. And as we follow Jesus, whether it is in the wilderness, by the sea, in the middle of nowhere or on the streets of our hometown, we can trust that God will provide what we need. There's more than enough to go around... more than enough food to feed the world, more than enough love to bring about true peace. God gives us what we need, but we are asked to take only what we need and share the rest with our neighbors. To live a life filled with love of God and love of neighbor.

This is our time, Beloved! This is our time to ourselves, body and soul. Jesus comes to us and challenges us to come up with ideas of how we can better use our blessings to serve God and neighbor.

Brainstorm together.

Soon we will feast at Christ's table. As his own life is poured out for us, it becomes our bread. It is in the giving of himself that he is most alive, even as he dies. And those of us who follow rather than chase Jesus learn the simple truth from his Living Word: we are only filled full when we empty ourselves.

Jesus is the bread of life not for what he puts into our stomachs, but for how he teaches us to live, really LIVE. In the extravagant welcome found at the table, he is shaping us into his body and preparing us to give ourselves in the same way as he gives himself.

"I am the bread of life," he says. "I will give you what you need, it will rain like manna from heaven. I will give you what you need, but the rest is up to you." The rest is up to us!

Invitation to Give

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Let us bless our loaves and fishes in the service of God's Beloved Community

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

***Hymn of Preparation**

The Communion Prayer

One: Let us gather around the table with the offering of bread and drink upon it and the promise of the Living Christ among us. This is the welcome table of God where all who seek to be at peace with their neighbor and all who seek the mercy of God in Christ are embraced. Come, for we are invited in to this holy mystery. Come

All: We are ready!

One: Jesus said: "I am the bread of life. All who come to me shall not hunger, and all who believe in me shall never be thirsty,

All: We are hungry and thirsty. O Lamb of God, we come!

The Story

One: We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took his authority as the Christ and offered the bread in thanksgiving and said . . .

All: "Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

One: In the same way, and by the same authority, Jesus offered the cup in thanksgiving and said...

All: "Take, drink. This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."

Blessing the Meal

One: Come, Holy Spirit. Come. Open our eyes to the mystery of Christ's presence in these ordinary things in these our ordinary lives. May they be for us the very essence of the living Christ in our midst. Through the broken bread ...

All: We participate in the Body of Christ.

One: Through the cup of blessing ...

All: We participate in the new life Christ gives.

One: These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Come, for all things are ready!

Sharing the Family Meal

Prayer of Thanksgiving *(adapted from the Church of Ireland)*

One: Mighty God, we praise you for your goodness and your love. When we turned away you did not reject us.

All: You came to meet us in your Son the Christ, welcomed us as your children, and prepared a table where we might feast with you.

One: As we give thanks for the gift of this bread, Lord Jesus, we bless you: you are the bread of life.

All: And as we lift up the cup of your covenant, Lord Jesus, we bless you: you are the true vine.

One: Holy Spirit, giver of life, come upon us now; may this bread and wine one body with our Savior Jesus Christ. As we eat and drink these holy

gifts make us, who know our need of grace, one in Christ, our risen Lord.

All: O Blessed Trinity: with your whole Church throughout the world we offer you this sacrifice of thanks and praise. Thanks be to you, our God, for your gift beyond words.

One: And now with the confidence of your children, we offer the prayer our Savior taught us:

Lord's Prayer