



Wednesday Bible Study with Pastor Hetrick
"All Creation Sings"
Session Two- Holy Food
October 21, 2020

We Come to the Hungry Feast

1 We come to the hun - gry feast hun - gry for a word of peace.
2 We come to the hun - gry feast hun - gry for a world re - leased
3 We come to the hun - gry feast hun - gry that the hun - ger cease,
To hun - gry hearts un - sat - is - fied the love of God is
from hun - gry folk of ev - 'ry kind, the poor in bod - y,
and know - ing, though we eat our fill, the hun - ger will stay
not de - nied. We come, we come to the hun - gry feast.
poor in mind. We come, we come to the hun - gry feast.
with us; still we come, we come to the hun - gry feast.

Text: Ray Makeever, b. 1943
Music: HUNGRY FEAST, Ray Makeever
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Let us pray: Loving Creator, we give you thanks for your creation and everything that is in it. Teach us to love and care for our communities and neighbors, near and far. Help us to remember you in the breaking of the bread, and meals of every kind, now and always. May we recognize the holiness in all you give us to eat, and strive for its care and protection. Amen.

Some of the first ways our kids learned to sing were in our table graces, sung before our evening meal at the end of wherever the day had taken us. Throughout Scripture, images abound of harvests, God filling the hungry with good things, and setting tables where all are loved and welcome

Can you think of familiar "Harvest" or "feeding" stories?

+God giving a garden full of food to Adam and Eve; the meal of the Passover before the Exodus; Abram and Sarai feeding visiting strangers.

+Consider the images from the Psalms, such as Psalm 67: 5-6

May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
The land yields its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us.

Or a recent passage from Isaiah: "On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines. (Isaiah 25:6)

In the New Testament, perhaps we think of the Feeding of the Thousands, The Last Supper or breakfast on the beach after the resurrection. Much of Jesus' ministry happened around meals.

Everyone feels hungry on a daily basis. Most people are able to satisfy this craving and need. Even if not immediately, they can count on having a meal or snack within hours. People who suffer chronic hunger don't have the option of eating when they are hungry. They do not get enough calories, essential nutrients, or both. People who are hungry have an ongoing problem with getting food to eat. They have a primary need — how to feed themselves and their children today and tomorrow. They have little energy for anything else. **It is commonly known that the cause of hunger in the world is not a shortage of food but rather access to food.** It may be because they can't afford to buy enough food. It may be both.

Some countries have a "hunger season" every year. It's when the previous harvest is gone and the next harvest is not yet ready. It can last as long as three or four months. The U.S. doesn't have that kind of a hunger season, but for many families, some weeks are hungrier than others. These usually come toward the end of the month, as families run short of food before they have money to buy more. People can't simply decide to spend less on rent, but if necessary, they can spend less on food. For many low-wage workers, retirees, people with disabilities, and their families, even careful planning cannot stretch the grocery budget throughout the month. Less expensive — and less nutritious — filler foods can keep children's stomachs from growling, but they can't provide what children need to grow and learn. Adults who are missing meals because they can't afford to buy food can't concentrate as well at work.¹

There is a related reason people cannot access food. Some people are hungry because food is in short supply because the land simply cannot sustain it. **How does our diet impact our environment?** The University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality and Healing notes Americans' demand for cheap food, has led to American agricultural policy for the past 30 years focusing upon providing large amounts of inexpensive calories. Two of the cheapest sources of calories are corn and soy, which the federal government has long subsidized and which make up a large percentage of our caloric intake today (often in the form of high fructose corn syrup or soybean oil). Corn is also a large part of the diet of the animals we eat. But growing just one crop consistently (a monoculture) depletes the soil and forces farmers to use greater amounts of pesticides and fertilizers. The effects of pesticides and fertilizers on natural wildlife and our water supply is well-documented. Currently, the "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico, where no fish or other animals can live, has grown to 8,543 square miles, the size of New Jersey. This is due to chemicals in the Mississippi River, particularly fertilizers, as it flows into the Gulf.

¹ Bread for the World resources

Ecologically speaking, we are squandering the nutrients taken from the soil and not replacing them fully. Commercial fertilizers focus on nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, but provide little else, so they essentially simplify the biochemistry of the soil. **We have broken the ecological link**—the nutrients from the soil used in growing food are no longer consumed locally and then returned to that soil as compost and other waste. This is due to the depletion of nutrients in the soil through monoculture and the use of fertilizers, which simplify the biochemistry of the soil.

Additionally, increasingly, **the food Americans eat comes from far away**. Shipping our food long distances and processing it not only contributes to air and water pollution, but depletes the food of nutrients. About 14% of food is lost in transit due to damage and spoilage. Eating local, and eating organic and sustainably farmed foods play a key role in supporting our web of creation here. Sometimes we are not aware how our consumption here depletes what is available for those in other parts of the world. One example of this lies in the amount of corn used for ethanol fuel that depletes the main staple of eating in Latin America.

Finally, we live in a world paradox where obesity is rising and malnutrition is rising. Reducing food consumption and food waste also lowers the environmental impact of your eating habits. In our Supersize Me world, we eat too much and waste too much. The EPA calls the amount of food wasted by Americans "staggering," noting that Americans threw 33 million tons of food waste into landfills in 2010. This food waste accounted for 14 percent of the entire solid municipal waste stream that year. Planning strategically will help you to reduce your own food waste. In other words, purchase only what you will use for specific meals you've planned, and eat your leftovers for lunch. Instead of going to the grocery store to look for dinner ideas, look in your kitchen and consider what meals you can make from what you already have. Your daily eating choices impact the environment greatly. Changing your eating habits may prove to be one of the most effective ways to help preserve the environment, your neighbors and yourself. Fortunately, the choices that benefit the environment often keep you healthier, too. Many of us trembled at the shortages during the early times of the pandemic—perhaps we can reflect upon the walk of our siblings in the world and grow our understanding that God really did create us to be interdependent for good reason, and grow in our trust of our loving Creator.

Our sacraments are occasions to reflect on human relationships with the rest of creation. The presence of an element of nature and the pronouncement of a word in relation to the offer of the element of nature assure us that the reality of Christ/God will be present in, with, and under the elements and the whole event, so that they are sacramental—capable of bearing the holiness and grace of God into our lives to transform us.

The sacrament of Holy Communion is an opportunity to realize how we are embedded within what God gives for food. We use natural fruits of the Earth as a vehicle for God's presence: wine from grapes and bread from grain.

But it is more than that. Grapes grow from the vine that brings it forth, the ingredients of the soil, the water that nourishes the soil, the beetles that aerate the soil, the sun that shines on the plants, the air that surrounds the plant, and the laborers who bring in the harvest. The composition and the combination of these elements is unique to the particular area or region where the grapes are being raised. Add to these factors the wood from the trees used to make the barrels in which the wine was stored and the ingredients employed as fermenting agents.

We can reflect in a similar way on the bread used for communion. The elements of the Eucharist get us in touch with all of creation.

The elements of the sacraments are “common” elements of life—elements of food upon which we depend for life—assuring us that **if God can be present in and through such common elements as bread and wine, then surely God is present to us everywhere in life.** What difference does it make to our view of the daily food we eat and the daily drinks we drink knowing that bread and wine are sacramental? The Eucharist is meant not only to lead us to experience the particularity of its symbolic meaning in the communion meal. It also leads us to think differently about all common elements of life—in such a way that our common experiences of them also become holy. All elements of creation may convey for us the grace of God. As Martin Luther wrote, “God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees and in the flowers and clouds and stars.”

When we see all of life as sacramental, it changes our relationship to and our responsibility for creation—our concern for pure water, our desire not to waste food, the problems with pesticides on grain and grapes, and a host of other ecological problems to which humans have contributed can be seen in a new light. We can re-dedicate ourselves in worship and prayer to stop actions that degrade nature and to find ways to restore God’s creation. We who have been hungry can begin to see how the choices we make in the world affect whether others are filled with good things, or go hungry.

If you are looking for more information about global hunger, each year the global hunger index is calculated. You can find this year’s data here.

<https://www.globalhungerindex.org/pdf/en/2020/appendix-a.pdf>

L: For the marvelous grace of your Creation, we pour out our thanks to You, our God.

**C: We praise you, O Lord
for plants growing in earth and water,
for life inhabiting lakes and seas,
for life creeping in soils and land,
for creatures living in wetlands and waters,
for life flying above earth and sea,
for animals dwelling in woods and fields.**

L: How many and wonderful are your works, our God! In wisdom you have made them all!

**C: But we confess, dear Lord,
 As creatures privileged with care and keeping of Your Creation that we have
 abused Your Creation gifts through arrogance, ignorance, and greed.
 We confess, Lord, that we often are unaware of how deeply we have hurt Your
 good earth and its marvelous gifts.
 We confess that we are often unaware of how our abuse of creation has also
 been an abuse of ourselves.
 For our wrongs, Lord, we ask forgiveness. We offer our repentance. We
 promise to reverence Your Creation as a gracious gift entrusted to us by You,
 our God. We promise anew to be stewards and not pillagers of what You have
 entrusted to us. We offer our covenant with creation to pledge our commitment
 to care for Your good Earth.**

**L: Creator God,
 You have given us every reason to learn and promote this wisdom of lives lived
 in harmony with Creation. May You daily be present with us, gracing our
 service, our loving, our striving, through Christ Jesus, our Lord.**

C: Amen

Eat This Bread *Jesus Christ, Bread of Life*

Refrain

“Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and nev - er be hun - gry.
 OR Je - sus Christ, bread of life, those who come to you will not hun - ger.

Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.”
 Je - sus Christ, ris - en Lord, those who trust in you will not thirst.

Text: Taizé Community
 Music: BERTHIER, Jacques Berthier, 1923–1994
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