

DINNER IS READY



Scripture:

Ephesians 5:15-20

¹⁵Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 6:51-58

⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



Several years ago the pollster George Barna conducted a national survey and asked the question, “What is the phrase you most long to hear?” The overwhelming, number one response was rather predictable: “I love you,” not too surprising. The solid second place answer was, “I forgive you,” again not

unexpected. But the third most popular phase was one I would not have guessed. It was, “Dinner is ready.”

Dinner is ready. Where I grew up as a kid, there were several different methods the parents, mostly moms, in my neighborhood used to gather their children for dinner. The

neighborhood kids would be outside playing football, baseball, basketball or throwing the Frisbee, and when dinner time came the moms of the neighborhood had their tried and true methods to get us home for dinner.

David Cerbin's mom had a booming voice and to summon her son to dinner she just simply opened the back door and vocalized very loudly, "David, David Cerbin, dinner is ready." Even if we were half way down the block playing, she could easily be heard. She would say his name twice, and even if David was in the middle of an important game he was on his way home in a flash.

Now Stan Conklin's mom had a more subtle, more elegant, but equally effective method to call her brood to dinner. She had her handy man run a rope from the kitchen window at the back of the house to a bell that was attached to the front corner of garage. She would pull on that rope from the comfort of her kitchen and the bell would ring. Stan would hear that bell and drop what he was doing and head for home. Stan's reaction to that bell was almost like the response Pavlov got from his dogs.

The Sloan family had two boys who were almost always outside playing with everyone else on the block. But their mom used the messenger system when it came to calling her sons to dinner. Mrs. Sloan simply sent her young daughter outside to summon the boys in person. The younger sister wasn't always successful by simply telling them it was time for dinner. But if she was unsuccessful on the first try, Mrs. Sloan would send out a small sample of the dinner menu and that would get the boys moving inside in a hurry.

So this morning I want to talk about dinner; I want to talk about food; I want to talk about bread.

BREAD

So bread, one of the most basic of foods, is where we meet up with Jesus this week in our scripture verse in John. Jesus is talking, about bread, about dinner, about life. Bread is such a simple food; simply flour, water and yeast is all it takes. Now to get good bread you need to let

it rise before it is baked. It takes time for the yeast to work. In many ways that is exactly how life is isn't it. And we have to ask ourselves the question, are we willing to wait on God, are we willing to allow that yeast to rise?

HOW MUCH OF THE BREAD ARE WE WILLING TO EAT?

And if we are willing to wait on God, how much of the bread are we willing to eat? Are we willing to take a big piece, are we willing to take into our lives all that Jesus is willing to give? Or are we just interested in taking a small piece of what Jesus has to offer, a small crumb?

It all depends on how fully we are willing to let God be in control of our lives.

DOGS

Many years ago when my now twenty-five year old daughter, Monika, was just a young girl, four or five years old, she became fascinated with dogs. She loved dogs. And she had a time in her life when I think she truly wanted to be dog. She started to wear a pair of socks attached to a head band that became dog ears. These were clean socks, but socks none the less. She had a little plastic dog nose and mouth with whiskers that had an elastic band attached to it that allowed her to put it over her own nose and mouth. So between the sock ears and the plastic nose and mouth she was about as authentic looking a dog as you could get. She could accomplish this in just a few minutes, no fancy costume needed. But in addition to that, several years in a row she went all out for Halloween and, you guessed it, she went as a dog. She wasn't interested in being a princess, or Wonder Woman; she just wanted to be a dog. Monika's idea of going shopping was not to the toy store but to the pet supply shop to buy a leash or a dog squeak toy.

My wife, Liz, and I indulged her in her fantasy. It was really quite cute, but more

importantly to us, it spoke to committing to something fully. She got books on dogs, made school reports on dogs and wolves and coyotes. She had dog stuffed animals, bed sheets with dogs and even a dog wallpaper border in her room. Because of her interest that turned into a commitment, she developed a love of all animals, but especially dogs.

When we got our own dog, she would play with him for hours. When the dog wanted to get a break from playing with her, he would go into his dog house to rest and she would follow him in. She discovered quickly that the more fully she embraced this love of dogs the more she understood them; it brought great meaning to her young life.

As I think about the love my daughter had for dogs, I realized that that is what faith and life is really all about. The more we embrace what we love, what we have a passion for, what we truly believe to be good, life becomes fuller and more meaningful. And our faith becomes more alive within us; it becomes more vibrant and an integral part of our lives.

JOHN

And that is exactly what Jesus is talking about in our scripture verse in John. Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven."

JESUS INVITES US TO EAT THE BREAD OF LIFE.

Jesus invites us to eat the bread of life. No, what Jesus is really inviting us to do is a whole lot more than that; he is encouraging us to break off a big chunk of bread, or better yet, to eat the whole loaf. Jesus is inviting us to take all that he has to offer to us and making it not just a small part of our life but rather our way of living.

**Jesus has modeled for us;
he has set the example of how
to live a full, meaningful, rich and
complete life. We just simply
have to follow his lead.**

But so often I am far too timid in the amount of bread I am willing to eat. Is that the case with you as well? Yes I'll try it out, but it is hard to commit so fully to what he is offering. It can be so foreign to what I am accustomed to hearing and seeing. Jesus is calling; but sometimes I have so much trouble hearing his call. Why is that?

SOCIETY'S VALUES VS. GOD'S VALUES

I think that sometimes that occurs because I get so distracted by what society offers as an alternative. The glitz and glamour of what we see in the world can be so tempting. The consumerism that we see so prevalently displayed in all walks of our lives can be so alluring. And yet it seems to me that nearly every time I put my trust and faith in what society sees as solutions to my problems, only leaves me hungry for more. Following the values of society leaves me hungry. I still want to eat, but I eat all the wrong things. I consume all of those things that tend to leave me feeling empty, and unsatisfied. It is like all I am eating is dessert.

But when I reflect on those times in life when I do feel happy and satisfied and content with life, they are the times when I have followed the lead of Jesus, when I thought less of my needs and worked to help those who truly were in need, when I fully committed myself to the task at hand. Those tasks could be with my family, my work, my church, my volunteer opportunities. When I commit to fully understanding what is important, life becomes so much more meaningful. What is important in our lives will change throughout our life. What was critical at one point in our life will change over time. That is okay, changing is not a bad thing.

For my daughter, Monika, the fascination of dogs wore off a bit as she grew older. She still loves dogs, and animals, but as she got older she did a lot of baby sitting and she grew to love kids.

Thank goodness she stopped wearing dog ear socks to school and out in the public. She became a child development major in college and now her true love and passion in life is

young children. What could be more important than that! And it all started with a love and passion, and a commitment to dogs.

God is calling all of us to follow the example that Jesus lived, and to help lead others to a place where they, too, can find their true meaning and purpose in life.

ARE WE READY TO LISTEN? ARE WE READY TO HELP LEAD?

Are we ready to listen, are we ready to help lead? God, like the mothers of my childhood neighborhood, will use a variety of ways to call us. We need to be open to whatever method God chooses to use.

There may be times when God just simply calls our name. It may be just a whisper in our ear, or a loud booming voice. But there will be no mistaking who is doing the calling.

God may ring that sweet little bell that reminds us of what we need to be doing.

God may even send a messenger to prompt us about what work we need to be involved with. That messenger may be your good friend, it could be our pastor, but it could also be a complete stranger. God so often uses the most unexpected people, in the most unexpected ways, to do God's work.

But whatever method God uses to call us, the response we offer will say a lot about not only who we are but what we truly believe in.

EPHESIANS

Paul, the writer of Ephesians, reminds us that, "Be careful how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

No matter how old or young we are, there is no time to waste. We need to wake up every morning and the first thing when we get out of bed is to say, "Thank you God for another day. What have you got in mind for me today?"

What would happen if we actually did that?

TRIVIAL VERSUS IMPORTANT

Most of us turn on the TV or radio first thing in the morning and get sucked into whatever is happening in the world. Now that is not to say that everything being reported is not worthy of our attention; some of it is really important. But the media today is so good at including the most trivial things in amongst the important, but the trivial seems so often to get the most air time. Sometimes it is even hard to distinguish between them in the way they are presented to us.

So we need to decide each and every day, what God is calling us to. What important work needs to get done? How much of the bread that God is offering to me am I willing to eat today?

DINNER IS READY

I don't know about you, but I am hungry. Thank goodness I hear that bell ringing. DINNER IS READY. Amen



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