

Bread for a Healthy Life  
Exodus 12:43-51, 1 Corinthians 11:23-34  
John 4:31-42

There was a newly started Kentucky Fried Chicken Restaurant on an intersection in a small town. On the across street of the new restaurant, there was a Catholic Church. On Sunday morning there were many people crowded at the Catholic Church. A new manager of the restaurant, standing in front of his Kentucky Fried Chicken, watching the crowded Catholic Church, smiled at himself with his a bright idea.

Next early morning, on Monday, he visited the priest of the Catholic Church and introduced himself and suggested the idea he had in mind. "Father, I'm a Catholic and I know the mass; during the mass we pray the Lord's Prayer. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray like this; "Give us this day our daily bread." I understand that "the bread" does not mean bread only, but a meal in general. So, I would suggest that if this church could change just one word, "chicken" instead of "bread," in the Lord's Prayer, then my company will donate to this church one million dollars.

He thought that if the whole congregation were praying "Give us this day our daily chicken" during the mass, then the people who attend the mass would come in and buy chickens at his restaurant.

After heard the visitor's suggestion, the priest nodded with smiling and then replied, "I have no problem with your suggestion but I can't decide by myself. I will ask my bishop about this suggestion when I visit him." The next morning the priest visited his bishop and told what he heard from the manager of the Kentucky Fried Chicken. When the bishop heard what the priest said, he nodded with a smile and then said, "I have no problem with what you heard from the manager, but I can't decide by myself. I will ask my archbishop this suggestion when I visit him." The next morning the bishop got up early in the morning and visited the archbishop and told what he heard from the priest about what he heard what the manager of the Kentucky Fried Chicken suggested.

When the archbishop heard the bishop's suggestion, he nodded with a big smile, and then said, "I have no problem with what you heard from the priest but I have to check one thing before making a decision." Then the archbishop called his secretary and asked him, "When is the expiration date of our contract with the Bread Factory?" That is gossip about the tendency of today's religion to be based on materialism.

Today is World Communion Sunday. This day calls the church to be the universal, inclusive Church. This Sunday includes the Ecumenical Cycle of Prayer for the church and the world, for every nation on earth. The communion is a sharing of the bread and cup, together in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the bread and the wine are not consecrated and spiritualized, it doesn't mean anything; this bread can not be better than the chicken in worth.

I have three points from the scripture reading, Gospel of John 4:31-42, that are Jesus' message to us today. The scripture reading is a part of the story of the Samaritan Woman.

The setting of this story goes like this: Jesus was persecuted by the Pharisees in Judea, so he learned about this, and decided that he had to leave Judea for Galilee. So Jesus left Judea and had to walk through Samaria with his disciples. The shortest route from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria.

On the way to Galilee, Jesus, being wearied with his journey, had to stop by at Samaria and he sat thus by a well. This was a historical monument site. This well was centuries old, Jacob's well in Samaria. This well still exists now, situated about half a mile to the east of Balata, the site of ancient Shechem. The well is about 105 feet deep.

It was about noon by our time when Jesus visited in Samaria. The noon of the desert is the time of heat, and the time of the noon meal. No body walked at this time. But, a woman of Samaria came to the well to draw water where Jesus was sitting. Jesus was waiting for somebody who could help him to get water. But Jesus always waited for somebody seeking the living water for the soul.

At that time, and throughout history, there had been a deep conflict and animosity between Jews and Samaritans. They did not talk to each other and did not even make eye contact with each other. But, a Jewish male, Jesus, said to a Samaritan woman, "Give me a drink." It was such a surprised to her that she replied, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" Then Jesus, ignoring the woman's saying intruding into argument, introduced himself, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." This implied a deep meaning of the identity of Jesus.

But, the Samaritan woman could not understand what he meant. A long conversation was required before she could recognize him. She was so frightened and pleased when she recognized whom she had met that she could not stay there any longer. After she discovered who it is that asks her for a drink, she ran to the village to announce to the people that she saw the Messiah.

Jesus was also pleased to see the woman, who was so pleased that she could not help announcing the good news to her beloved people. This was the setting of the scripture reading today. Meanwhile, his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. The disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

What is this food that Jesus implied, that we do not know about? I think it is the bread for a healthy life for us. The bread for healthy life is the Lord, his life and his promise.

First, Jesus shows us a new meaningful lifestyle. Jesus shows us his lifestyle; selfless for himself, generosity for others. This lifestyle is quite opposite to us. We, too, have the

will of God to live out; and a work that he has given us to do. But, we are grudging and niggardly with our lives.

I have two daughters, Esther and Alice. When Esther was in high school year, she went to a Catholic all girls' high school. So, she learned and acknowledged the sacraments of the Catholic Church at school. At the beginning of ninth grade, Esther met a classmate named Paola in her Spanish class. Paola's was part of a very large and very poor family who were in political exile from Chile. For the first few weeks of school, Esther noticed that Paola never brought a lunch to eat at school.

One day Esther asked her mom to prepare two lunches for her so that she could share a lunch with Paola. So, from that day on, Sun packed two sandwiches and drinks and extra treats for Esther every day. So that Paola would not be embarrassed that someone had noticed her poverty, Esther arrived at school early every day and secretly put the extra lunch in Paola's locker. Paola never knew where the lunches came from, but it pleased Esther very much to see Paola in the lunch room from that day on, eating everything that had been packed into that lunch bag every day.

As Esther got to know Paola better, she found out that the poor friend hadn't had even a breakfast. From then on, Esther decided to take both of her lunches and put them both in Paola's locker so that she could eat one and take home the rest to share with her brothers and sisters. After that, Esther didn't go to the lunch room during lunch hour so that Paola wouldn't know that she was not eating. Meanwhile, Esther enjoyed keeping her slim figure by fasting at lunch every day. One day, Esther shared her experiences that she had been fasting for her friend for a couple of months, and that meant the Eucharist for her. During her fasting she found what the Eucharist meant for her. The bread of caring, bread of love, and bread of forgiving are meant be to the Eucharist.

Bread is a material thing, the means of filling up a stomach for me. But it could be a spiritual thing when it is sent to the hungry, wrapped in Christian love. That is what is meant by Communion. The act of giving of our selves to another is the moment we taste the bread which brings us a truly healthy life. "This is my body, bread broken for you." Jesus' saying to us implies his self-giving, his giving of his life to us. We hunger for spirit, we hunger for the meaning of life and love for one another. Until we are filled with spiritual bread, our life is starved. Therefore, healthy life is not a matter of what to eat but a matter of eating—for what.

Secondly, "the small is beautiful" is what Jesus saw. We are used to ignore the small things. We are used to not being satisfied with small things. Small things are easy to be judged by the surface. But we do not know the inside of the small things. The parable of the mustard seed is the distinctive example of why we should not judge by seeing the exterior, but by recognizing contents of what is within.

Everybody is seeking for success, wealth, honor, power, comfort, and attractiveness for a happy life. But, the real happiness is not hidden in these. Those are the surface of a life. Recently in Korea (as anywhere, I assume) many young movie stars who seemed to be

successful, honored, wealthy, and happy have been committing suicide, leaving children, families and friends. Their souls were empty and they lost the meaning to live in the world.

Jesus spends his time and efforts and life for the least, the ignored, the discarded, the isolated, the sinners, the weaker, the sick and the poor. The Samaritan was a woman who was ignored by others who knew her. Jesus knew that the Samaritan woman was hungering in her soul. So he offered her the bread for a healthy life. She was isolated, ignored, and rejected. She saw herself as the least worthy. But, Jesus saw her differently, as a person who was thirsty for a meaningful life. Usually, we do not count on the poor, the sick, the weak, and people of powerlessness as first of our guests or our friends. The ministry for the least is the ministry of Jesus. That is the heart of the meaningful life.

Lastly, Jesus shows us that there is hope in sowing. The sower and the reaper are equally important. There is that saying how some have the glory of the harvest, and some the labor of sowing barren fields that keep looking no less barren for all that we can do. And in the end sower and reaper will rejoice together. There is a message from the Master to those who are discouraged because their lot has been cast in a day neglected and unpopular, and are impatiently pushed aside as irrelevancies that get in the way of real and practical progress.

George Steiner says, "There have been long periods of the Church's history when there were no revivals, and no Christian work but that of the steady teaching and preaching of the truth, and (what is vastly more important) the influences of Christian personalities, and the deep and well-nigh irresistible stream of training and love of the home. ... With the majority of human beings, development is slow. It is accomplished in the unrecorded, unromantic work of the home or the classroom or study... without struggle or passion or tragedy," and that, if we are lucky.

If we are been called to such quiet, un-dramatic work, let us fulfill our work with loyalty and thoroughness; well assured that our labor is not in vain in the Lord, though it may look as if it were, and that if not our own hands, then other hands will gather a rich harvest from what we have sown.

When I drive over mountain passes in high elevations, I thank those who paved the road with asphalt a long time ago. They were the sowers, we are the reaper. I'm not afraid of being a sower. Rather, I am pleased to be a sower than a reaper.

Once a philosopher, Pascal said, "If there were a choice either of 'hope' or 'completion' in my life, I would choose hope rather than completion." Sowing is hope while reaping is completion. Sow your life with prayer, service, and compassion; Then, later you or somebody else will reap what you have sown. Be yourself the sower, then your children will be the reaper.

Some years ago in the north, a little girl was lost in the woods. It was wintertime, snowing, sleeting, and bitterly cold. Hundreds of people combed the forest, desperately

searching for the little girl. Time was of the essence. They knew she couldn't survive long in that freezing weather. For hours they looked, but no luck. Finally, the searchers came up with the idea of joining hands, so that they could walk through the forest in a single line. They tried it, and in less than fifteen minutes they found her! But it was too late. She had died from cold and exposure. In the hush of that awful moment, someone said, "Why, O why didn't we joint hands sooner?"

Today is World Communion Sunday. After taking communion, we are going to join hands and stand around the pews, making a circle. As a symbol of the world, we will sing the last hymn holding hands with one another. We are called to serve and to make whole the world by the Lord our Jesus Christ. The bread for healthy life is Christ, His life, and His promise. The bread for healthy life is the bread of faith, of hope, and of Love.