

Sermon Notes – July 28, 2024
The Holy Gospel of St. John 6: 1-21
Peace Lutheran Church
“The Bread from Which There Is No Hunger”

Seriously, five weeks of readings from John 6, and always the subject is bread? How can anyone possibly have that much to say about bread?

You may have already noticed that, this first week of five, doesn't actually begin with bread. The Prayer of the Day signals our starting point: “You place within our hearts a longing and hunger for the Bread of Life...” So let's begin by attending to our longing, by leaning into our hunger.

In her *New York Times* bestseller, author Susan Cain writes, “The secret that our poets and philosophers have been trying to tell us for centuries ...is that our longing is the great gateway to belonging.” Cain continues, “Many of the world's religions teach the same lesson ...that this place, this state that we're longing for, is the perfect and beautiful world. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, it's the Father's Garden of Eden and the Kingdom of Heaven, ...[which is] the deepest desire of every human heart.”

The 2 Kings narrative of Elisha stands in a long line of Hebrew and Christian feeding stories rooted in the all-too-common condition of hunger - both physical and spiritual. Ephesians gives voice to the common condition of longing; longing for strength, longing to know and experience the divine presence, longing to understand the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ.

In each text, the inherent promise is that God is to be found, not only when hunger and longing have been satisfied, but also in that very hunger and longing.

John 6 begins with Jesus' acknowledgment that the large crowd will need something to eat. It is here, in this place of need, hunger, and longing that... “Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks, He distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, so much as they wanted (v. 11). And they were satisfied!

Recognition of the presence of God begins not in the rarified air of the other-worldly, but in the utterly ordinary and common condition of hunger. Where there is hunger, where there is longing, there is God. We, our need, our hunger, our longing all matter in God's world! What would our lives be like if we acted as if we believed that? What would our lives be like if we were confident that God shows up in the lives of real, ordinary people who share the communion experience of hunger, thirst, fear, and longing? What would our

lives be like if we trusted that because God is love, there is and will be enough for all? What would our lives together be like if we trusted that God's goodness is being revealed - even perhaps, especially - where all of creation cries in longing?

Perhaps today we can be content to speak only sparingly of bread, but instead that our hunger matters and attracts God's attention. Today, right here, right now, we can embrace with confidence that God responds to our longing with compassion. This very day we can write ourselves into the age-old story that wherever we experience hunger, thirst, fear, weakness, and longing, God is already present. Whenever we lean into our hunger and longing, we discover we are actually leaning into Father God!