

April 14 2013

Scripture Lessons *Revelation 5:11-14*
John 21:1-19

Sermon *Spiritual Food*

You have probably heard this story before, but the story is told of a righteous man who died and he ascended to those Pearly Gates to be admitted into Heaven. But before he entered Heaven, he made quite an unusual request. He asked to be allowed to visit the other place for just a few minutes just to satisfy his curiosity about that realm. So the righteous man was allowed to journey just briefly down to the infernal regions to take a quick look at what was happening there. And there he saw a very strange sight. People were seated at long, long banqueting tables, and the tables were piled high with all kinds of delicious food. However each person was tied to his chair and also had one hand tied behind his back, and the other hand was tied to a very long spoon. Now each one could reach the spoon and scoop the food up but the spoon was so long, the person could not even manage to get any of the food into his own mouth. (This for some of us could be Hell)

Later the righteous man returned to those Pearly Gates of heaven and was duly admitted inside. However as first, he was very upset to find almost exactly some scenario in Heaven as in the other place. There were, also, people seated at long, long banqueting tables and those tables were piled high with all kind of delicious food. Each person was likewise tied to his chair and each one had one hand tied behind his back with that large long spoon tied to the other hand. There was no way anyone was going to manage to get this bounty of food in his or her own mouth. However, there was one difference between Heaven and the other place, the people in Heaven were using their spoons to feed each other.

You know as well as I do, that food is one of the most basic needs of life itself. The Bible is full of imagery about food from the Garden of Eden, to the vineyard of Noah, to the manna in the wilderness to the promise land of Israel which was flowing with milk and honey. God was, and is, regularly concerned with providing food for God's people. In the New Testament, Jesus is more often found with people in the setting involved eating meals than in any other setting. In the Gospel his recorded miracles in fact involved the miraculous provision of food including this event that is recorded as today Gospel the miraculous catch of fish provided for those disciples after the resurrection. Jesus invited the disciples to come and dine, or as the more modern version translates the phrase, as come and have breakfast. He was continuing the tradition of God's interaction with human beings which goes always the way back to the Creation itself. Jesus was most

certainly concerned with eating and with drinking for these seemingly mundane concerns of life and death are concerns for each one of us.

There is another dimension to Jesus concern with food however and underlying figurative significance and it becomes clear and apparent in this incidence with the disciples further along in chapter 21 of John's Gospel. When the mealtime was finished with Jesus familiar threefold instructions that Susan read for us about Peter "Feed my sheep". Frequently expressed in Jesus statements about self in his expression "I am the Bread of Life" and "I am the Living Water" So in addition concerned with literal physical food, an obvious necessity of human life, Jesus was equally concerned with the necessity of feeding souls with spiritual food. Life is more than food in the body more than clothing, said Jesus. The body can be well fed, the body can even be obese, but the human soul has to also receive nourishment, lest the person die in a spiritual sense.

What is the food of the soul upon which Jesus would have each one of us as his followers dine? While he himself walked upon this earth, the channel of God's love, he himself was that food. Jesus himself was actually the food and drink for the hungry and thirsty souls. To be in Jesus presence, to receive Jesus teachings to soak up his vitality was spiritual nourishment for those who followed in the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus was the Logos. Jesus was the Living breathing Word of God. Like spectators standing near a water fall, like those who come near to Jesus was sprayed of this overflowing fountain life itself. Today the Gospel or the Good News of Jesus continues to be food for the hungry souls and drink for the parched souls as well. The vitality which was so obviously contained in Jesus while he walked upon this earth continues to be present in his recorded life and teachings found in the Holy Scriptures. So miraculous kind of way understandable, actually, only by faith and actual experience of those hear and study and read the word of God in Scripture with open and seeking and prayerful souls are in a sense nourished as in the same manner as those who first heard Jesus when the Gospel was spoken and the Gospel was lived out while he was on this earth. The Holy Spirit which I call God in Action is now with us brings to life what might otherwise be considered to be dead words upon a page. Through God's Holy Spirit the living vital word of God in Scripture is somehow miraculously transformed back into that Word of God in Jesus Christ which is spiritual food for those of us who are persons of faith. So if your soul has been on a meager or even starvation diet in recent times, God invites us today to dine, or even feast upon the riches of Jesus who is that Word of God. God calls us to expose ourselves to Jesus often in private or public. God invites us to listen to the stories of Jesus life read and explained in worship together. God invites us to read and study about Jesus in our homes with those closest to us. God invites us to take him with us as we pray

alone with Holy Spirit as our Guide. We are invited to fatten our souls with that miraculous spiritual food which is found in Jesus Christ.

Oh! But, final note, we are invited to feast upon Jesus, that Word of God, and yet we are not invited to become obese upon that spiritual food because as we nourish our souls we are invited by that Gospel to turn that spiritual food into spiritual muscle by employing that love of Jesus in our daily walk as we encounter people every day in our lives. We are not invited just to eat the Gospel. We are invited to live the Gospel day by day. Jesus said unto them come and dine and that same invitation which was given to the early disciples that lakeside morning is still open to us. God has prepared a wonderful feast for our souls and it is here this morning in our midst so we are invited to come. We are invited to come and dine with our Lord Jesus in this resurrection season today.

Together we say AMEN.