

*“The Bread of Life”*

October 2007

Hymn All the way my Saviour leads me VU 635

Scripture John 6: 35-40

Verse 35: I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never go thirsty.’

Prayer Let us pray - Gracious God, we pray for your blessing on all people. May the faithful find salvation and the careless be awakened. May the doubting find courage and the anxious be calmed. May the weary find rest and the strong be renewed. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Lesson Bread!! What would we do without bread? Every country has some form of bread. Even in ancient times they ate bread. Bread is one of the staples of life. Bread is associated with life, health and nourishment. We need bread/food to satisfy physical hunger and to sustain life.

Earlier in chapter 6 of John, Jesus had fed over 5000 people with just 5 loaves and 2 fish. After that the people had wanted to take him by force and make him king, but Jesus tried to get them to focus on more spiritual matters. In verse 35 Jesus uses a common, every day experience to help the people understand a deeper spiritual truth. He did this often in his ministry.

“I am the bread of life.” Jesus is saying I am the one that satisfies. Remember the Old Testament when the Israelites were fed bread from heaven? Manna they called it. As they wandered in the wilderness, God would send fresh manna from heaven each day for them to eat. Unlike that manna which spoiled quickly, Jesus will not rot or spoil and we can feast on all that He gives.

Jesus satisfies. What does it mean to be completely satisfied? Many people today are looking for something that will satisfy them, will fill them and make them feel whole and complete. Some think that it is money and material things, others may think it is family or relationships. There are those who strive for success and for others health and happiness is enough. Like eating bread, you may be full for a time and then find yourself hungry. What Jesus is saying is that as we believe in Him as the son of God, the one who came to die on the cross so that we in turn could have life, we can find peace that passes all understanding. We can be filled. Our hunger, our search for something to fill the void in our lives, can be filled with God’s love and guidance and comfort and compassion and patience.

We live in a wonderful world, but one that can be filled with hardship and pain and loss. Trying to hold on to the things in this world that give us satisfaction is like trying to hold on to manna from heaven. It always spoils. Instead, feast on the love that Jesus offers and you will find that God will provide for your needs. In the middle of struggles and frustration, God can bring satisfaction, satisfaction that goes beyond this life, a promise that we can have life eternal.

In our scripture, Jesus says: “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never go thirsty.” There is going to be pain in this world and sometimes a sense of loss. But God is present now. God says, “Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest. God wants, even in the midst of our difficulties, to fill our lives with peace and joy.

As you come to the Holy One to satisfy your hunger and to quench your thirst, you will never go away hungry or thirsty.

Discussion      Did the people understand what Jesus was saying? Do you?  
In what way do you know “the bread of life”?  
How do you usually respond to an impossible situation – a problem in your life that doesn’t seem to have a solution?

Hymn              Break thou the bread of life                      VU 501

Prayer             Let us pray – Thank you God for satisfying our wants and our needs. Thank you for being our bread of life, and for your everlasting love for each of us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

*This meditation is based on material prepared by Ernie Orpin, Winnipeg, MB*

Reminders        Remember Banff men’s conference, Toronto Conference fall rally, Four Counties fall rally and other club and group men’s activities in your area

Book of the Month      “The Invisible Force”    by Wayne Dyer

*“Affluence, Joy, and Thanksgiving”*

October 2008

Hymn As the deer pants for the water...

VU 766

Scripture Psalm 42

Verses 2 – 4 (New International version)

“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?

My tears have been my food day and night,  
while men say to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”

These things I remember as I pour out my soul:  
how I used to go with the multitude,  
leading the procession to the house of God,  
with shouts of joy and thanksgiving,  
among the festive throng.”

Prayer Let us pray – Creator, we come to offer our thanksgiving. In your presence our faith is warmed, our hopes rekindled, and our purposes strengthened. May your presence hallow us in this season of thanksgiving, that our hearts may be lifted to the joy that the days deserve. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Lesson Some years ago John Ruskin, an articulate dreamer wrote, “Wealth, well used is a fisherman’s net gathering men’s souls out of the deep. By the strength of our possessions we shall direct the acts, command the energies, inform the ignorance, and prolong the existence of the human race.”

In many ways we inherit the legacy of that dream, in hospitals, schools, parks, and patios. In these we have good cause for thanksgiving. Yet we know there was a flaw in Ruskin’s dream. He came to the same realization in his own lifetime and wrote, “The pursuit of money is the most cretinous, speechless, paralyzing plague that ever touched the brains of mankind.”

To make wealth the central dream of life is to violate God’s order of life. A European commented on the spiritual poverty in the midst of material wealth that he found in North America. “It seems to me that the deepest questions you ask are, ‘How can I lose weight?’, ‘Where can I park my car?’, ‘Where can I find a cheap vacation?’”

Here are six lessons that Jesus taught that apply to our age of affluence:

1 – Material goods are a gift of God to be accepted with joy and appreciation. Man does not live by bread alone, but we are told to give thanks for our daily bread, the symbol of all good gifts.

2 – Material possessions were not intended to be the primary objective in life. Although this may draw laughs, North American life is largely based on the assumption that the accumulation of assets is the primary goal of life.

3 – When Jesus said, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God”, he was talking of a life-shaping experience of yielding our wills to God’s will in a manner that sets out our priorities of all of life.

4 – The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of right relationships. Caring for others as creatively as we are able to will bring life’s deepest satisfactions.

5 – Our Thanksgiving celebrations, whatever they may be, are a reminder that richness of life consists of appreciating what we have been given, rather than in what we gather.

6 – All we possess has been given in trust and is to be shared.

All these are familiar thoughts. They become challenging when they are no longer mere sentiments but are measuring standards for daily living.

*(based on material from ‘Fire in the Bones’ by Robert A. Wallace)*

**Discussion**     Talk about Jesus’ six lessons listed above.

**Prayer**             Let us pray – Good and gracious God, giver of all things we bring our prayers of thanksgiving. Now hear our requests, we pray. Bless those who live under the shadow of oppression, those whose lives are threatened by hunger, those whose hopes are shaken by sorrow, those whose days are threatened by anxiety, the overworked, the underpaid, the unemployed, and the unemployable. Bless the countless refugees in squalid camps around the world, the homeless in city parks and streets, single mothers trying to make this season special, those who eat Thanksgiving dinner alone, whether in small flats or in sumptuous surroundings, those in isolated outposts, all for whom thanksgiving is a struggle. In our own thanksgiving, may we be aware of these our brothers and sisters. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

**Coming events**   See [www.aots.ca](http://www.aots.ca) coming events section

**Book of the month**     ‘The Pillars of the Earth’ by Ken Follett

## *“We need to be farmers”*

October 2010

Hymn “I, the Lord of sea and sky” VU 509

Scripture Luke 10: 1-4, 17 (New International Version)

After this, the lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.”

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

Prayer Let us pray together – We gather to hear your call, O God of love. Speak to us in this time of fellowship and worship that we may hear your call to service and answer, “Here am I, send me.” Amen.

Reflection Do we see the work that we do each day as a part of God’s work and God’s plan? Do we see that there are many tasks that need to be undertaken to bring about justice and peace in our world? Do we name justice and peacemaking as the work of God and therefore as our work as well? God calls us to do the work that needs to be done.

In his book “If it is to be it’s up to me”, author Thomas B. Smith tells of the powerful impact this attitude has in every area of his life. As he states in the first chapter, “An optimistic outlook on life has many advantages. It means you’re solution oriented and a possibility thinker. You look for the good. When you have a positive attitude, you’re more likely to be committed and achieve your goals and dreams.”

When we follow that message, “if it is to be, it is up to me”, as we work in our church and in our community, then we can know that we can do the work that God needs us to do.

There are many in the Bible who heard God’s call. Abraham, Samuel and Isaiah all heard it and gave the same answer, according to scripture. Isaiah heard God asking, “Whom shall I send and who will go?” They all replied, “Here I am, send me.”

In modern times, many have heard God’s call – some to be teachers, others doctors and nurses, social workers or labourers. It does not matter what the task, if it is done in a spirit of love and justice. It does not matter where the work is to be accomplished. It is our work, it is God’s work. God calls each of us to share in the coming of a world of peace and justice

Discussion What is our work at these stages in our lives?

Closing prayer Let us pray – God of call, help us to listen to your voice. Your work is our work. Our work is your work. Give us the will to follow where you lead, to reach out in love, to struggle for justice. Grant that we, with courage and daring, will stand up and be counted among your servants. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

## ***“Have Patience Men”***

October 2012

Hymn                      “O God, you gave your servant John”                      VU 718

Scripture                      James 5:7-11 (Easy-to-read version)

Your life on earth was full of rich living. You pleased yourselves with everything you wanted. You made yourselves fat, like an animal ready for the day of slaughter. You showed no mercy to good people. They were not against you, but you killed them.

Brothers and sisters, be patient; the Lord will come. So be patient until that time. Look at the farmers. They have to be patient. They have to wait for their valuable crop to grow and produce a harvest. They wait patiently for the first rain and the last rain. You must be patient too. Never stop hoping. The Lord is coming soon. Brothers and sisters, don’t complain against each other. If you don’t stop complaining, you will be judged guilty. And the judge is ready to come!

Brothers and sisters, follow the example of the prophets who spoke for the Lord. They suffered many bad things, but they were patient. And we say that those who accepted their troubles with patience now have God’s blessing. You have heard about Job’s patience. You know that after all his troubles, the Lord helped him. This shows that the Lord is full of mercy and is kind.

Prayer                      Let us pray together – We’re in a hurry God! It sounds as if James is preaching at us. We’re busy doing what we think you want us to do. Do we have to pay attention to this? Listen to us, now. Amen.

Reflection                      We all know of the young person who prayed, “Lord, I want to learn to be patient, and I want to learn now.” In this passage James encourages us to wait on God and to be patient. He also gives us a warning against wanting everything right now. He cites as examples farmers, the prophets who spoke for God, and Job. Each of these has to wait for “good things” to happen and must bear up to worry and hardship as they wait.

Who is the author of the epistle of „James“? Most church scholars believe that this James was the brother of Jesus. As background, James did not become a strong follower of Jesus until after His resurrection. James eventually became the head of the church in Jerusalem. He preached that Gentiles did not have to become Jews before they could be saved. He died a martyr in the year 62 C.E.

Throughout the book of James, he calls for a constant Christian life, for a practical faith, for a faith that works. James makes us think in a practical way. Take money for example. Despite our complaints about taxes and budgets, money still flows. He asks us to consider whether we hoard for ourselves when others are in need and even dying because of insufficient food, or medicine, or love and care. Do we put more value on worldly things for ourselves than on the things of God?

Taking time as a second example, if we have enough money, we know we never have enough time. We fill our calendars with activities, we are reminded electronically of “essential” appointments, but are we missing God’s will as we hurry about in all directions?

James' practicality is not too hard to understand. It may be too easy to understand. It is a challenge.

In closing, I am reminded of the signoff line from the CBC Radio One program „Dead Dog Café“ – “Stay calm. Be brave. Wait for the signs.”

Discussion - When are you tempted to hoard rather than to give and wait on God?  
- In what areas of your life are you impatient?

Closing prayer Let us pray –.O God, we pray that you would make us men who give freely of ourselves. Help us to wait patiently and to listen attentively for you to answer our prayers. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Halloween

Devotion for October 2014

**Hymn:** Great is thy faithfulness VU 288

Scripture: Genesis 8:22

## **Reflection:**

Don't know about you but I really dislike Halloween for a number of reasons, possibly just because I am old and getting grouchy. Not since my days in the country as a kid and out houses etc., have I liked Halloween. Surely though, we all know this celebration started out as a religious festival, well sort of. It has undergone quite a transformation though as it is only second to Christmas for retailers selling junk of all kinds. Sounds pretty cynical does it not? The local dollar store had its Halloween offerings from China out in August. Someone, and I know not who, said that for every cloud there is a silver lining, and guess what, there is a silver lining even with those pesky kids looking for more candy for doing nothing more than disturbing your evening of enjoying a glass of wine and your favourite book. Halloween means another harvest is in the barn, giving us something to be really thankful for and we can look forward to upcoming rest and anticipating the thanksgiving celebrations.

**Discussion;** Halloween has a lot of history, some religious, some not so, but a very interesting part of our Christianity and makes for a great discussion if someone will do a bit of digging into its history.

**Hymn:** All things bright and beautiful VU 291

## **Prayer:**

Dear God, for the beauty of the earth, this wonderful place you have provided for us, may we be truly thankful and forever celebrate your great faith in us and the many gifts you have provided for us.

# “Thanksgiving”

Devotion for October 2016

Hymn: VU520 We Plough The Fields

Scripture: Psalm 95: 2-3 And 1 Timothy 4:4-5

Reflection:

October tenth is Thanksgiving Day. At a certain age one wonders why we need a special day as we should be thankful for each one. Every day should be Thanksgiving. While searching for an October theme I did some checking and found, Oct 2 is world Communion Sunday: Oct 16 is world Food Sunday: Oct 17 is the International day for the eradication of Poverty: Oct 23 is Peace Sunday, and those are just some of the special days in October. You know, we once had Christmas, New Years, Valentines, Mother’s Day and a few other special days; they actually meant something. The introduction of a day for just about everything is like everyone being retired, a holiday providing a long week-end means nothing. When we dedicate a day to eradicating poverty, to end wars, to feed everyone, we just treat the symptoms and ignore the cause. Poverty won’t stop when the price of food is out of reach or unavailable for those in need while one percent of the population controls ninety percent of the wealth; wars wont cease as long as power hungry despots are allowed to be in control and those with the power make and sell arms to those despots.

Discussion;

Pretend we are in, lets say grade three or four, and the teacher says, “lets make a list of all the things we are thankful for. You shout them out and I will write them on this board.” I suspect we think, at our age, this is a stupid, perhaps childish exercise; however, try and be amazed at how unbelievably fortunate, lucky we are and how we so much take our privileged lives for granted.

Hymn VU 513 Give me, Lord a Thankful Heart

Prayer;

God, open our eyes, help us realize we should be truly thankful not only on Thanksgiving, nor generous and concerned on other special days, but every day. As the saying goes, every morning you wake up is a great day. Thank you Jesus. Amen

## Trick or Treat

Devotion for October 2017

Hymn: VU 516 Come, You Thankful People, Come

Scripture: Psalm 30:12 and Colossians 3 15:17

Reflection:

October is Halloween for some and Thanksgiving for others. On wonders if we need either. Both supposedly have religious beginnings. Halloween is rapidly overtaking Christmas as the best retail day of the year. Amazing what advertising can do. As for thanksgiving it is strange that we need a special day for it, however for me it is far more enjoyable than Halloween. Have to wonder what Jesus would think; would he open the door and distribute candy, would he enjoy turkey and pumpkin pie? Well neither existed in his day so it is pure speculation, but you know a discussion of the above really provides our personal insight into how we picture the savior of the world.

Discussion:

Well let's talk about Jesus and trick or treat and pumpkin pie!

Hymn: VU 217 All Creatures of Our god and King

Prayer:

Lord, help to make every day thanksgiving and celebrate the real Halloween. In Jesus name, amen.