

Readings:

Exodus 16: 9-21

Matthew 13:31-33

Mark 6:32-44

Holy Dough

(Holding up a packet of yeast). You are like this little package of yeast. You have so much potential as children of God that you can help the world to grow. You can become a handful of dough made holy – leavened – so that the rest of the world can be holy. You are meant to be the leaven of faith for others.¹

Matthew tells us “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast”² The book of Romans says “A whole batch of bread is made holy if the first handful of dough is made holy.”

Throughout scripture we read stories of God’s provision. God provides the Israelites with quail and manna the Psalms and Proverbs highlight God given provisions to all of creation, Jesus feeds the multitudes, and we continue to receive provision through God’s spirit to this day. But we know people still go hungry and so we need to discover a way to do our part. That is why sometimes it is important to have reminders of days like today.

World Food Day began October 16, 1945, to mark the founding of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). World Food Day is now recognized in 150 countries. Its aim is to increase awareness of global food issues and to advocate year-round action to alleviate hunger.

We know that hunger will always be with us and there will always be poverty but what I struggle with is that some believe it’s part of God’s plan. Scripture tells us over and over God is the provider. Jesus lives in a way that he believes God is a God of abundance and not scarcity and so I have to believe that there is more abundance than there is lack.

In bible study this week we read a passage from Job where God challenges Job to remember who it is that feeds the birds of the air, the flowers of the fields and the animals that roam the earth. Every passage we read sparked in us a belief that grew and the more we shared the more we believed and were reminded there is always enough.

¹ Rupp, Joyce “Fresh Bread, And Other Gifts of Spiritual Nourishment” © 1966 pg. 13

² Matthew 13:33

We recognized that this is a hard thing for us to believe because we are rarely satisfied and our desires and wants in life are often not filled. But on this day we are called to look around us and discover what we have, and perhaps as we look around and we discover that in Squamish alone there are over 150 homeless people, that in greater Vancouver Regional District there are approximately 2500 homeless. In B.C. there may be as many as 15,500 adults with severe addictions or mental illness who are homeless, while the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness estimates 56,215 households are at risk of homelessness. A B.C. Housing report last year found that homeless shelters turned away people more than 40,000 times—with 16,000 women and children turned away.³

That is a lot of people in our back yard who are with a home and most likely don't have enough to eat. But let's look even wider. The Food and Agriculture organization of the UN stated this week that we are called to **Achieving Food Security in Times of Crisis**. At a time when the global economic crisis dominates the news, the world needs to be reminded that not everyone works in offices and factories. The crisis is stalking the small-scale farms and rural areas of the world, where 70 percent of the world's hungry live and work.

With an estimated increase of 105 million hungry people in 2009, there are now 1.02 billion malnourished people in the world, meaning that almost one sixth of all humanity is suffering from hunger.

The FOA asks us On the occasion of World Food Week and World Food Day 2009, to reflect on those numbers and the human suffering behind them. Crisis or no crisis, we have the know-how to do something about hunger. We also have the ability to find money to solve problems when we consider them important. The FOA asks us to work together to make sure hunger is recognized as a critical problem, and solve it.⁴

How do we, this little group of people have any place in having an impact on these statistics? We all know it's too big – we in this room will not solve world hunger.

But we are the yeast. As I pondered questions of hunger and nourishment and how we might have any sort of impact on this I recalled the movie “Chocolat.”

It's the story of Vianne Roche a chocolatier who the spirit of the wind one day blows into a small, legalistic, rigid French community. She sets up a shop in the midst of lent and offers remedies for all sorts of ailments and sorrows. In the story we are told in the Mayan tradition coca is said to reveal one's destiny. Well it's not long before Vianne is clearly unwelcomed by the Count de Raynaud because her presence is altering the system of this depressed little village. But Vianne begins to function as; counsellor, psychiatrist, pastor and friend to the impoverished souls of the townspeople. She and her chocolate have the gift of awakening passion and life in people.

³ http://mostlywater.org/bc_government_jail_homeless

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/en/>

So when the count begins to discover the people coming to life and love he starts to condemn Vianne, he even refers to her as Satan in disguise.

But people are hard to stifle when they begin to grow and discover their potential. And finally on Easter morning the new young rector gets it and he preaches a resurrection story. He says he has discovered that “We can’t go around measuring our goodness by what we don’t do, by what we deny ourselves, what we resist and who we exclude. We’ve got to measure our goodness by what we embrace, what we create and who we include.”

And today scripture reminds us We can’t go around measuring our ability to give and make an impact by looking at what we don’t have. We must measure our ability to give and impact the world by embracing what we have and how we can share it with one another.

So if the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed or a measure of yeast, and if we as God’s children are like the yeast or the salt or the seed than God must believe we can make a difference that we can feed our world and participate in the nourishing of one another’s souls.

Joyce Rupp writes that to be that yeast or handful of Holy dough means we meet with God and are nourished by the spirit that opens our hearts to the beauty of one another. To be the yeast we must be willing to be kneaded and opened to struggle and trust that we and others will grow as we are transformed into wholeness. We must open our spirits up to be nourished by God and one another. Nourished in a way that brings us life and causes us to give of ourselves.

The yeast can’t just be left on top of a pile of flour and become a glorious loaf of bread. It’s a process to become Holy bread. And perhaps the analogy of becoming bread is a good one because it takes a lot of work, so much work in fact most of us aren’t even willing to do it.

But my friends we are the yeast. We are made/created to help one another grow that all might live the life abundant. So let us live embracing and giving of what we have rather than holding on the idea that we don’t.