

## We Are Food

John 6:24-35

Gut feelings. Gut instincts. Gut responses. Gut issues.

We take them seriously, don't we?

When a story is gut-wrenching, we find it to be extremely unpleasant or upsetting. When a person spills his guts, he is speaking truthfully and sharing everything.

Guts matter.

In fact, if you were to say, "She has a lot of guts," what would you be describing?...A person with a lot of courage, conviction, and resolve.

We know this is important, down in our guts.

In our Gospel reading, a crowd of people are anxious to find Jesus after the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. So, they get into boats and travel across the Sea of Galilee to the town of Capernaum. They see him there...and Jesus senses what they are up to. And he says, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill." (John 6:24-26).

The people are motivated not by what they saw, but by what they ate. When it comes to Jesus, they trust their gut.

Was this a bad thing? Not necessarily. You know why the skeleton didn't cross the road, don't you?...He didn't have the guts.

Guts are good. Some people argue that the stomach is like a second brain because it can so often drive our decision-making.

Since I was thinking and researching food and guts, I came upon an article by Diego Bohorquez (bo hor' guess), an assistant professor of medicine at the Duke School of Medicine. He contends that the gut is not secondary...It actually comes first.

“Very simple organisms do not have a brain,” he points out. “But they have a gut.” Over the course of the history of the world, creatures have had to eat in order to live. In fact, organisms were eating for around a billion years before they were even breathing. First, they ate, then they breathed, then they began to think.

“We eat three times a day,” Bohorquez says. “This is modulating, revamping who we are.” Put junk in your mouth, and you are going to look bad and feel worse. Eat good food, and you are taking a step toward health and fitness...not that this is new information for any of us. Bohorquez noted that as far back as 1923, an ad in the Bridgeport Telegraph said, “Ninety percent of the diseases known to man are caused by cheap foodstuffs...You are what you eat.”

Bohorquez knows this to be true. “At the core of who we are,” he says, “we are food.”

Jesus would agree. “Do not work for the food that spoils (perishes),” he warns the crowd, “but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (v. 27).

The people of Galilee remember the manna in the wilderness, which God had given their ancestors as bread from heaven. But Jesus says to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven” (vv. 31-32).

That sounds good, doesn't it? Food that endures. Bread from heaven. True bread. Makes your mouth water!

The people are still confused, however, so Jesus continues, “For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Such bread doesn't just taste delicious, but it actually gives life to the world. The people excitedly say to him, “Sir,...from now on give us this bread” (vv. 33-34).

Yes, they want this bread, and we cannot blame them. Bread turns staple grains such as wheat, rye, or corn into durable foods. It is a basic food found around the world, in many different cultures, that can be used to feed an entire city or nourish a hungry child.

We know that bread is good, down in our guts.

But Jesus is not talking about something made of wheat, rye, or corn. “I am the bread of life,” he tells them. “He who comes to me will never go hungry” (v. 35). Jesus is presenting himself as the most basic, durable, and nutritious form of bread available to us.

“I am food,” Jesus seems to be saying. “Take me into yourself and you will never be hungry or thirsty or hopeless or powerless. I am the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to anyone in the world - including you.”

When we gather for communion to receive the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation, we remember that Jesus broke bread with his disciples and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24). He asks us to continue to break bread and eat it together, believing that it is the body of Christ and the bread of life. We are nourished as disciples when we receive this spiritual food, strengthened, and equipped to be Christ’s people in the world.

When Jesus says, “I am the bread of life,” he is saying to us, “I am food.” He is saying, “I am the food that brings you forgiveness and new life, the food that brings you to health in body, mind, and spirit.” Jesus truly is “the food that endures for eternal life” (John 6: 27), the true bread from heaven which “gives life to the world” (vv. 32-33). All we need to do is eat this amazing bread, in faith and thanksgiving...

But at the same time, Jesus also wants us to know that we are food. When we eat the bread that is the body of Christ, we are nourished as the community that is the body of

Christ in the world today. The bread that Christ offers us is not designed primarily to feed us as individuals. Instead, it is meant to sustain an entire community. “Because there is one loaf,” said the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, “we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Yes, we are food: The body of Christ, the bread of life. Like Jesus, our challenge is to be good bread for a hungry world.

So, what is the recipe for this very special bread?

**First ingredient:** We are people who believe in Jesus,...deep in our guts. When the crowd approached Jesus in Capernaum, they said to him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered them, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one [God] has sent” (John 6:28-29).

Many Christians make a distinction between faith and works, but Jesus made clear that the two should never be separated. You don’t praise God on Sunday and then cheat someone on Monday. You don’t pray to Jesus in a small group and then fail to serve Jesus when he comes to you in the form of a hungry child. “Faith by itself,” said James, “if it is not accompanied by works, is dead” (James 2:17). The work of God is that you believe in me, said Jesus, the one “[God] has sent” (John 6:29).

Faith and works are as essential to Christian life as flour and water are to a loaf of bread. First ingredient.

**Second ingredient:** We are adaptable. Bread can be found in cultures around the world. The nourishment of bread can be obtained almost anywhere, but it comes in a wide variety of forms.

If we are going to be bread for a hungry world, we need to be adaptable as well, like bread is adaptable. This means taking worship beyond the walls of the church. It requires

meeting people where they are - finding out what they want and need. The best ministry adaptations may still be out there, waiting for us to discover. Adaptability...second ingredient.

**Third ingredient:** We are durable and nutritious, like a hardtack biscuit taken on a long hike. As the bread of life, we need to have the guts to walk into challenging situations, on the far side of our familiar places and comfortable routines. We provide real nourishment when we not only feed the hungry, but sit down with them for conversation. We advance the ministry of Jesus when we not only give donations to international missions, but to build friendships those living with us from different cultures.

True belief in Jesus requires acting as the body of Christ in the world. This means being adaptable, durable and nutritious, always looking for ways to nourish a hungry world.

When Jesus says, "I am the bread of life," he is saying that he certainly wants to feed us. No doubt about it. But he also desires that we be good food for others. Amen.

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