

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 100

Philippians 4:4-9

John 6:25-35

Sermon October 9th, 2022

God Cares for Us

Many of us are feeling anxious these days. We feel anxious about the rising cost of food. One survey showed that at least 25% of families in Canada have had to reduce the amount of food they were buying (**Image**). Another recent report showed that the food bank demand is at an all time high. Inflation, drought, and war are creating a global food crisis.

We feel anxious about our grandchildren's future. The changing climate, increases in global conflict, polarization, household debt, mental health concerns, communicable diseases. What kind of world will our grandchildren be raising their children in?

We feel anxious about the fate of our church. Declining membership. Bigger deficits. Aging congregations. More churches closing their doors. A lack of people training to become clergy.

Many of us are feeling anxious these days.

Kind of like the crowd of people who have been searching high and low for Jesus and his disciples ever since that memorable evening where Jesus fed them all with a few loaves of bread and fish.

Like us, many of these people are struggling to access food. Many of these people have debts they need to pay off. Many of these people are victims of living in an Empire where violence and conflict are on the rise. Many of these people have felt disenfranchised about their faith, as they struggle to get by.

Like us, many of these people are feeling anxious.

Well, in our gospel this morning, the crowd finally catches up with Jesus and his disciples. They are hopeful that their prayers have been answered. God has sent someone into their lives that can give them food, forgive their debts, heal their conflicts, breathe justice into their lives. They just need to see Jesus perform this miracle one more time. "Show us Jesus that you can feed us whenever we are hungry."

Of course, like many of us, their primary focus is on filling their physical hunger with the food that sits in their bellies. They even recall their history where God gave them manna to help them survive the desert journey. "If only we get enough food Jesus. Then all our anxiety will go away."

Unfortunately, if we take a deep dive into the cause of our anxiety, we see that the rising cost of food alone is not the driver of this anxiety. If only it was that simple.

More likely, the driver of all our anxiety comes from feeling a lack of trust towards something or someone. For example, not trusting those institutions that are in place to help us have access to our physical needs.

For the crowds, they don't trust the institutions in place to care for their needs. Whether it is the Empire or the Religious establishment. And so, this has left them feeling anxious, and longing for someone new to trust in.

In our gospel this morning, Jesus hears their anxious pleas. Jesus hears our anxious pleas. And then Jesus redirects our attention towards the promise that God will care for all of our needs. Not just our physical needs, but also, our emotional, relational, and spiritual needs.

God is the one we need to trust in, because God has sent us the true bread from heaven. The bread that will fulfill our physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual hunger and thirst. The bread that will deal with the root of the problem, calming our anxieties. God has sent us the true bread from heaven. Jesus.

We see throughout the gospels, throughout the history of the church, throughout our lives that Jesus comes into our lives reflecting God's gracious love to us. Fulfilling our needs. Reassuring us that God is trustworthy.

For example, Jesus feeds us when we are hungry. The crowds bear witness to this a few days earlier on the beaches of Galilee. We bear witness to this whenever we experience the generosity of someone or an organization who helps us get access to our physical needs (**Image**).

Jesus forgives us when we fall short. The soldiers bear witness to this on the cross. The disciples bear witness to this whenever they struggle to do what Jesus does. Peter bears witness to this when Jesus forgives him three times for denying Jesus. We bear witness to this whenever we come to the communion table, and take and eat the body and blood of our saviour. We bear witness to this when we receive absolution after our confession, our repentance. We bear witness to this when we receive forgiveness from someone we hurt.

Jesus heals us when we are hurting. Many bear witness to this healing during Jesus' earthly ministry. From the deaf person to the blind person to the paralyzed person to Peter's Mother-in-Law who wrestled with a fever to the child whose body shook uncontrollably to Lazarus who was raised from the dead. We bear witness to this healing whenever we encounter Jesus' healing touch through the people Jesus invites

into our lives to participate in this act of healing. The doctors, counselors, friends, family members, neighbours.

Jesus breathes justice into our lives when we feel the distaste of injustice. The many sinners, tax collectors, and lepers experience this justice when Jesus stands with them in the face of persecution. Inviting them back into the community where they belong. We experience this justice whenever we encounter Jesus' hospitality lived out by someone or a community who stands with us (**Image**). Who welcomes us with all of our wounds.

Jesus is the true bread from heaven that fulfills our hunger for food, as well as, our hunger for relationship, justice, and spirituality. God is indeed trustworthy.

In our Philippians reading, Paul states that when we trust in this promise that God will care for our needs through Christ Jesus, we are moved to give thanks to God for everything we have. Our food, as well as, everything and everyone that brings meaning to our lives.

Paul goes on to state that when we give thanks to God for everything we have received, then we are reminded of this promise. And it is in this promise that God will care for our needs that we find hope to endure the more anxious times in our lives.

Tomorrow, is thanksgiving. Tomorrow, we will stop, and reflect on all God does to care for our needs. Our physical needs as well as our relational, emotional, and spiritual needs. We will gather with friends and family around a table surrounded by our delicious favorites, and give thanks to God for these very relationships, as well as, the abundance of food (**Image**).

Tomorrow, is thanksgiving. A time for giving thanks. A time to live out the gracious nature of God towards one another.

In our reading of Deuteronomy, we see that when we trust in God's promise that God will care for all our needs. When we give thanks for God's fulfillment of this promise. Then we feel moved to act out this gracious love in our community.

We give of what God has given us to the people in our community who are in need. In fact, we give of the first fruits. The best of our stock.

Thanksgiving gives us ample opportunity to support our local food banks, or hamper programs or volunteer our time at a soup kitchen, or invite someone in our community who is in need to our community dinner (**Image**).

Thanksgiving is a day where we remember God's promise. Where we give thanks for the fulfillment of this promise. Where we feel moved by this promise to care for others in the same way God cares for us.

Thanksgiving is a day where we reclaim our trust in God, the one, who sends the true bread of heaven into our lives, so that we will never hunger or thirst again.

And so, as we feel anxious, feel reassured in God's promise that God is taking care of our needs through Christ Jesus. God is feeding us, forgiving us, healing us, breathing justice into our lives, and is moving us to do the same to others.

Let us pray, gracious God, thank you for Jesus Christ, the true bread from heaven, that you sent to us, to fulfill our physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual needs. May we feel moved by the fulfilment of this promise to care for others in the same way you care for us. **Amen.**

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