

Homily  
Harvest Thanksgiving  
Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa  
The Reverend Victoria Scott  
Readings: [Dt 26:1-11](#); [Ps 100](#); [Jn 6:25-35](#)

Are you hungry? What are you hungry for?

You might have expected that my first questions, on this Thanksgiving weekend, might be “Are you thankful?” and “What are you thankful for? I do want to know if you are thankful, and what you are thankful for. What I really want to know though – and what I want us to be attentive to – is if we are “full of thanks”. I want us to pay attention to what fills us, because it is what fills us that overflows from us into the world. What fills us determines how we are with each other and how we are in the world.

Sometimes, we’re not asking the right questions, or we’re not asking the questions in the right order. If we are to be full of thanks, we need first to pay attention to what we are hungry for, and what fills us...

There is a kind of hunger that has a name. It can be satisfied – at least for a time – with a meal. There is another kind of hunger for us as human beings, though, and it isn’t as easy to name. It’s a hunger deep down. A longing. A feeling that something is missing in our lives. This kind of hunger often goes unnamed and misunderstood, and we try to satisfy this hunger with things that will never satisfy it: food, drink, money, possessions, substances even. This kind of hunger is a hunger for relationship, for meaningful connection: with God, with each other and with our world.

Our Gospel passage this morning offers us Jesus talking about the bread of life. Our lectionary has us mostly in Luke’s Gospel this year. Not today, though. Today it’s John. John’s Gospel is very different. It’s full of mystery and mysterious language. It draws us into the intangible along with the tangible. The unseen along with what we can see with these earthly eyes. And, John’s Gospel invites us to think about this other kind of hunger. Jesus says:

“...For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

and then he says:

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Jesus is talking about this other kind of hunger in these verses. He is inviting us to be attentive to a spiritual reality that is beyond what we see immediately before us. That spiritual reality is a relationship – a meaningful connection – with God. Attentiveness to that spiritual reality fills us: with God’s presence, with God’s love.

When Jesus says “I am the bread of life”, he is saying “I am the way to this relationship with God”. He is saying “I am the way to find God’s presence so that it fills you, so that it satisfies your deepest hunger, and your deepest longings”. Jesus is saying “I reveal the true character of God, and that character is *love*”. It’s a love that breaks down barriers. It’s a love that overturns oppression. It’s a love that rights injustice, and that seeks peace. It’s a love that is truth, and grace, and compassion, and it is right there, filling us, and just waiting to overflow into the world. This is living bread. This is what gives us fullest life. Close your eyes. Feel the fullness of that love.

Our Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, are outward signs of the fullness of God’s love. The bread and wine that we share are God’s love given in a way that we can take in, a way that we can receive visibly, tangibly. If you come forward at the time of communion for a blessing, that is a way to receive, to take in, God’s love. Bread, wine, blessing: feel that fullness when you come forward for Communion today. Be full of thanks for that bread and wine and blessing.

If we are full of thanks for the love and presence of God that fills us, there is action tied to that. God’s presence is made known to us, given to us in Jesus, and we are invited to join in that giving. We are invited to let the fullness of that love overflow from us to others. From us to all of creation.

If we're not attentive to the reality of God's loving presence, it's easy to let other things fill us. Anger. Resentment. Harsh judgements. Fear. Worry. None of these things is life giving. These things are all isolating, separating us from God and from each other.

There is nothing solitary, nothing isolated in any of God's message of love made known in Jesus. The Gospel – the good news of God's love – is about *relationship*. It is about Jesus drawing us into relationship with God. It is about the relationships in this life that are the living out of God's love. We are not expected to “go it alone” as we try to be attentive to the spiritual reality of God's presence with us, the reality of God's love within us.

This awareness is a gift that we can give each other. We give each other that gift by recognizing that love in everyone and everything, and by saying to each other “I am filled with God's love and so are you”. We give that gift to the world by recognizing God in all of creation. By being filled with thanks for the reality of God's loving presence in everyone and everything.

I invite you to think this week about those two kinds of hunger. That hunger that can be named. and that deeper hunger. Think about what is filling you and remember God's call to relationship and connection. Remember that the way to satisfy that deeper hunger and longing is not judging others. It's not measuring ourselves against others and breathing a sigh of relief that we're better, holier, or more blessed.

May each one of you feel full of love, today, and every day. May you be full of thanks for the reality of God's love in each one of us, and throughout all of creation. Pause in the fullness of that love here this morning, and then take it into the world. Look for it wherever you go, and in everyone you meet. In Jesus name. Amen.