

Pastor Roy's sermon from August 5, 2018 (parish worship at Warrington Twp Park)

Children's sermon: Do you ever ask, "What is it?" **We wonder sometimes about new things or new people.** Who is that? How do you get to know a new friend? We ask, "Who are you?" Stories tell us who people are or what things are. When there is a new student at school, it's good to talk to them so you get to know them directly. You can swap stories.

The Hebrews complain in the desert. We are hungry. Hey Moses, did you bring us out here for us to just die? They were freed from the land of slavery. They are going to the promised land. But now they are hungry. Really hungry. God provides special food that they have never seen before. They ask, "**What is it???**" **It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.** What's that? This food keeps them alive during the 40 years of their wondering in the wilderness. Manna bagels, manna burgers, manna cotti (Keith Green's take on the possibilities). What is it?

How many times have you asked "What is it?" As a child? --responding to a meal the first time your mom or dad served it. Remember the life commercials back in the 70s—Give it to Mikey, He won't like it, he hates everything. We might ask how a friend is doing...What is it? What's wrong? Or upon seeing an animal across a field. Looking at a type of nest on the ground which you haven't seen before. Or, the Hebrews looking at something they've never seen before, but will be seeing a lot of over the rest of their lives.

When the people come looking for Jesus, his response according to John is, "What, are you hungry again, and are looking for more food to eat? Focus instead on food that lasts forever, that never goes bad or runs out, but is always available. A source of life which never ends."

We find ourselves asking Jesus the same question, "What is it? What is this bread, this source of life that never runs out? Is this another parable? Perhaps Jesus originally spoke of the bread of life not to communicate an exact teaching, but to get his disciples to think about what and who is the source of their life. These kinds of questions and answers cause us to dig around, ask more questions, find more answers. Jesus is challenging his listeners to keep digging deeper, to keep asking, "What is it that truly fills, rather than leaves me wanting more, and more with little satisfaction?"

If we were able to ask Jesus, “What is the bread of life for you?” What do you think he would say? (...) God? The Kingdom of God, the Reign of God. Prayer? Yes. And in the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “I am the Bread of Life.” We wonder, how is Jesus the Bread of Life? Is John thinking about communion? By the time the Gospel of John is written, the Eucharist, communion is pretty well established as an essential element of Christian worship. Bread and wine become the celebration, a great thanksgiving for Jesus’ life, for his gift of his love which saves, which gives life which never ends. Communion is an experience of Christ’s presence when we gather. I am the Bread of Life. Remember me. When you gather, I am with you.

Jesus is the beginning, the substance, the fullness of our life together in love, in mercy, in peace. Each of us find in Jesus a slightly different fullness. That is the beauty of Jesus, there is plenty for us to chew on, to learn, to hear, to be challenged by, for comfort, to be pulled into the embrace of God who sustains and is the source of everything good, all of life, and what gives us life.

Sometimes we are tempted to think that thinking the right thing about communion makes it real or true for us. That would us creating Christ’s presence. We simply need to trust that Jesus is meeting us at this table—in the bread, in the cup. Nothing we think, nothing we do will give us this experience. It is a gift. The only requirement is that we open ourselves to receive his presence. His presence in love, mercy, peace. What he brings to the table, we receive. Love is a gift. Always a gift. Never earned, never demanded, always received with an open hand or outstretched arms.

Thanks be to God. Here I conclude with the words of Teresa of Avila.

“Christ has no body now, but yours. No hands, no feet on earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks compassion into the world. Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which Christ blesses the world.” Teresa of Avila