

Sermon for August 8, 2021  
Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church  
Los Alamos, New Mexico  
The Rev. Canon Raymond Raney

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33  
Psalm 130  
Ephesians 4:25-5:2  
John 6:35, 41-51

Jesus said: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Week before last we talked about the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 and the boundless, infinite grace of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we talked about the hunger and thirst that is satiated by the Love of God in Christ.

And we also were fed a banquet as we said farewell to Valerie as she leaves us to follow the call of her soul to be fed in seminary.

Which begs the question: What feeds you?

We come here today seeking the nourishment of God's Holy Word and Sacrament in the Eucharist. Our souls are fed here, but what about when we leave this place and return to home and to school and to work. What feeds us the other six days of the week?

We live busy lives. More often than not, if a friend asks me how I'm doing, the answer won't be "I'm busy" but "I'm fine." Just FINE. In AA speak, that would be: Feeling Insecure, Neurotic, Emotional or its opposite: Fabulous, Intelligent, Nice, Excellent.

Or for me and for many of us: Feelings Inside Not Expressed.

And its no wonder we shut down. We are bombarded constantly by noise. Traffic noise, Radio noise, TV noise, social media noise and the constant buzz of the 24-hour news cycle feeding our anxieties.

The noise of our lives is like a fluorescent light that needs a new ballast, buzzing and flickering incessantly. It's this constant, irritating noise – a low grade anxiety that never seems to go away, and disturbs us even as we climb under the covers seeking the peace of sleep. Sometimes my mind just will not STOP.

We are constantly taking in data from all manner of sources, but we rarely have the time and space to process the information: What does this all mean? What can I do? What should I do? Who am I anyway?

I am reminded of a Cherokee folk tale about an elder's warning to his grandson about the two wolves that are at war inside him.

The darker wolf is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, lies, superiority, and ego.

The lighter wolf is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, empathy, generosity, truth, and faith.

The boy ponders what his grandfather told him, and asks: Which one will wins?

Now the answer I always heard was: "the one you feed."

However, I recently came on what was maintained as the traditional answer:\* "If you feed them right, they both win."

As the story goes: if you only feed the lighter wolf, the darker wolf will hide in the shadows and pounce at moments of weakness to get the attention he craves. He will always be angry and at war with his lighter twin, who gets combed and brushed more often.

If both are acknowledged and fed, they both can be satisfied and everyone wins.

Both wolves have qualities we need:

The dark side has tenacity, courage, fearlessness, strength of will, and resourcefulness, which the light side lacks;

And the light side gives us compassion, caring, heart, and the ability to value the needs of others over your own.

Feeding them both empowers them to serve us and quiet their internal struggle so we can hear the voices of a deeper wisdom and choose the right path.

How we choose to treat the opposing forces within us will ultimately determine how we live.

She who has peace inside has everything.

She who harbors a storm within his heart and soul has nothing.”

So – What feeds you?

In the Letter to the Ephesians today, we are admonished to “speak truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.”

There is nothing wrong with being angry. The Slings and Arrows of outrageous fortune need to be acknowledged and truly felt. The danger comes when the anger and resentment fester and infect our very being. Acknowledging anger and wrongs is essential to letting go and allowing the hurt to heal.

In the same way, we need to cultivate the love God has given us – particularly in the love we share with our family, friends and those friends we have yet to meet.

In dealing with either side of this dualism, it is essential to find time to process our feelings.

For me, It is helpful just to be quiet; to turn off the radio, TV, phone and just sit.

My wife and I came to the realization that we needed to discriminate what we read and what we watched on TV. As I explained before, we cancelled Direct TV, and became intentional about what we watched.

My habit had been to have news on all the time. This constant barrage of all the wrongs and misdeeds and all the sadnesses of the world. Yikes.

Now We limit our news to the PBS Newshour and BBC because they seemed a more balanced perspective, and we also watch the evening news the next morning to give us time to digest it.

We also stopped watching TV shows that did not have a moral compass.

We stopped watching shows that were negative, sarcastic, demeaning and not positive. There actually are shows that are uplifting and leave us feeling restored and grateful.

Another way of feeding your soul is to say “No” to things that are not helpful, not happy, not enriching just because it was easier to say “yes,” no matter how much we wanted to say “no.”

And we practiced saying “yes” to things that made us happy, provided joy and helped ourselves and others.

I’ve always been one to give to others. It’s just easier to be there for others. The hard part for me was learning to ask others to help. I just didn’t want to feel that there was something I couldn’t do on my own. I learned that working with others can often feed my need to be close to others.

I remember a story about heaven and hell being a table around which all the people are gathered for the evening meal.

The table is set with all finery, the foods are many and delicious. The dishes are fine china and crystal. The implements provided for eating this sumptuous feast are three-foot long spoons that must be grasped by the end.

In hell, those gathered are starving because the spoons are too long for them to feed themselves.

In heaven, those gathered are smiling as they feed each other across the table. Each and all are satisfied and happy.

Jesus tells them: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever."

Who feeds you? We come here today to be fed with the gifts of God for the People of God.

The closing prayer at the Healing Service on Wednesdays goes like this:

Faithful God in the wonder of your wisdom and love you fed your people in the wilderness with the bread of angels, and you sent Jesus to be the bread of life. We thank you for feeding us with this bread. May it strengthen us that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may embody your desire and be renewed for your service through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

\* Story of the Two Wolves from [chipmonkbaking.com](http://chipmonkbaking.com)