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2 Samuel 11: 26 – 12:13a  
Ephesians 4: 1 – 16

Ps. 51: 1 – 13  
John 6: 24 – 35

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

How do we know when we’ve had enough? How do we know when we are sated? What does “enough” feel like, taste like, look like, sound like, smell like? What does “enough” really mean? Does it matter if the subject in question is shares of Amazon stock, or the sound of applause, or long-term care insurance, or the latest fashion, or military might to conquer nations?

To glance at the headlines on any given day, it’s pretty obvious that much of humankind is frequently out of touch with the answers to these questions. We want more, bigger, better, farther, stronger, taller, more beautiful, younger. The news abounds with stories of greed and corruption, of abuse and waste, of violence and victimization, as people try desperately to satisfy these quests. Quests which are really just cover-ups for their deepest longings for security, love and to be needed. And it isn’t just in the headlines, it’s in each of us, too. Money, control and power, sex, war, food – or dieting, alcohol and drugs, and attention or public acclamation are just some of the ways in which we try to get “enough.” Or maybe just a little more. Because *that* will be enough. Really.

In our scriptures today, there is the same sort of misplaced seeking. In Second Samuel, we hear of David who is willing to have someone murdered because he, who has a whole palace full of concubines and wives, needs just one more wife, Bathsheba. Then, in today’s Gospel from John, the crowd around Jesus can only focus on satisfying their stomachs and not their souls.

Through the centuries, people have tried to describe this searching and longing in humans. Blaise Pascal, the French mathematician, compared our unquenchable desires to an abyss that must be filled:

*“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in [humanity] a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This [we try] in vain to fill with everything around [us], seeking in things that are not there the help [we] cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words, by God.”*

C. S. Lewis, in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, agreed, suggesting that joy points beyond itself to “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction.” In a sermon, Lewis referred to this deep longing as “a desire for our own far-off country.” Like Pascal, Lewis believed that this insatiable desire could only be filled with a supernatural object: God, who alone can fulfill them by God’s indwelling presence.

Perhaps one of the most discerning expressions of this human predicament is from St. Augustine of Hippo, in his book, *Confessions*, a book that goes on to detail Augustine’s previously libertine life of unsatisfied desires. However, in the very first paragraph, Augustine sets out his conclusion before he provides the journey. He writes, “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

An insatiable abyss, an unsatisfied desire, a restlessness, or a deep longing for a far-away place. All begging the question as to whether we are hardwired to seek God. All pointing to a God-shaped hole in us that only God can fill.

“Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” The “hungry” part, of course, relates to the topic of bread in this passage and the preceding story from last week’s Gospel of the feeding of the 5,000. But the “thirsty” part connects to two chapters earlier in John: the story of Jesus encountering the Samaritan woman at the well.

In Chapter 4 of John, Jesus offers the unnamed woman living water. She perhaps wonders why the man, who just asked her for a drink, and who has no bucket with which to withdraw water, is now offering to give *her* water. It is then that Jesus tells her he is not talking literally; he is not talking about water from this well, but about something much more life-sustaining. “If you drink from this well,” he says in effect, “you’re just going to get thirsty all over again. But if you drink of what I’m offering, there will be a never-ending spring within you.” Somewhat bewildered but intrigued, because that emptiness deep inside of her has just been touched, the woman responds, “Lord, give me this water!”

Now, it’s pretty clear that the woman is still thinking literally and expects Jesus to suddenly produce another magical well so that she can quit making these multiple-times-per-day trips to the well. But the evangelist, John, knows, and we, the readers and listeners, know, that Jesus isn’t talking about a deep hole in the ground. He’s talking about a gift from God in the form of himself.

So, now, in Chapter 6 of John, Jesus has just finished turning two fish and five loaves of bread into a meal for 5,000. Which is pretty darn impressive. At least a lot of the crowd thinks so, and they want more of these magical miracles, so they follow Jesus like a bunch of groupies after a band. But Jesus knows whereof they are made. He knows they weren’t really paying attention to all the things he was trying to tell them. He knows they’re following him for him to feed them again. Or for him to do something else stupendous.

So, Jesus tells them that they should quit focusing on *that* kind of bread, because it’s just flour and water, and it’s eventually going to get blue-green and become a science experiment. Instead, Jesus says, “desire, work for, bread that doesn’t go bad.” To which the people respond by reminding Jesus about the manna in the wilderness that Moses gave them, a.k.a. Bread from Heaven. Then Jesus reminds the people that Moses couldn’t possibly have done something like that by himself. It was God.

Jesus then goes on to say that God is giving the people the *true* bread from Heaven, for the true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to this world. Hmmm. Bread that doesn’t go bad and that can sustain the world? Probably a little bewildered, but definitely intrigued, and because the emptiness deep inside of them has just been touched, the crowd responds, “Lord, give us this bread always!”

Just like the woman who was expecting Jesus to suddenly point to a new well, this crowd is clearly thinking literally about a loaf of bread. Maybe a little focaccia with some rosemary and olive oil on top, perhaps some Challah. Eh? Who knows. But again, John the Evangelist – and his readers and listeners – know that Jesus isn’t talking about a little, round mound on a dough board. Jesus is talking about a gift from God in the form of himself and what he has to say. Jesus says quite clearly, “I am the Bread of Life.”

The Rev. Rick Morley thinks there's a reason for this parallel between Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 in John. John's Gospel is probably being written 60 – 70 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. By this time, the church has been around long enough that baptism and the Eucharist are fully established as integral parts of the life of the church and in the individual lives of Christians.

In these two passages, ordinary things from everyday life – water, and bread – point to extraordinary realities. Big things are going on, even if you can't always see them, Jesus is saying. Like mustard seeds turning into the greatest of all trees, bread and water, in the hands of God, can be the very seeds of eternal life. God can cause wells to gush up, even into eternity. And God can satisfy the hungriest soul. Simple things as portents of things way too large to understand.

Morley thinks that these two passages are prompts for prayer. Prayer in regards to our seeking the true object of our heart's desire, prayer in finding a resting spot for our restless hearts, prayer to satisfy our deepest needs and longings. For folks not yet part of the Body of Christ, Morley says, those who are awaiting the waters of baptism, they are called by the woman at the well to pray, "Lord, give us this water so that we will never be thirsty!" It's a prayer of yearning and longing. It's a prayer that knows who can provide that water and what the stakes are when it's given.

And for the community of those who are already baptized, for the Body of Christ, those who already have this spring of living water gushing up within them, well, we are to pray, "Lord, give us this bread always!" so that we shall be sustained in the ways and the knowledge and the love of God.

How do we know when we've had enough? How do we know when we are sated? What does "enough" feel like, taste like, look like, sound like, smell like? Enough feels like the peace that passes all understanding. Enough tastes like bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ. Enough looks like helping others find that same love of God through our actions in this world. Enough sounds like prayer. Enough smells like the breath of God. How will we know when we have enough? When we quit running after all the things of this world and we realize that the love we have wanted most deeply has been waiting right here for us all along. "O Lord, give us this bread always!"

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