

Lenten Midweek Worship  
March 2, 2016  
Coming to Our Senses: Taste  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, IA  
Rev. Amy Larson

Psalm 34:8-10, Isaiah 25:6-8, John 2:1-10

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

Our sense of taste carries so many associations with favorite foods, comfort foods, foods we despise because of a painful memory.

Our taste buds can call to mind special meals with loved ones and food shared in the midst of tears. Particular flavors can bring us back to certain times in our lives.

Good flavors were not a big part of the meals in my household growing up.

My mom was the cook in the family and she could make a great tasting meal, especially pot roast, but taste was not usually her top priority.

She read a lot of health care magazines and always wanted to make sure her family was getting enough of the latest wonder food.

- When flax got big she bought a new coffee grinder to have one specifically dedicated to grinding up flax seeds.
- When almonds were the rage she'd have huge bowls of raw, whole almonds and a nut cracker out on the table to tempt us to choose them rather than bread.

As we see often in Decorah, it is quite possible to make super-foods taste good.

My mom just didn't read enough cooking magazines to aid her in this attempt.

As a result, we ate a lot of strange green concoctions.

My sister and I would tease Mom that she approached meal times as nutritional opportunities rather than as dining experiences.

She would proudly say, "You bet I do, and I'm keeping you healthy."

My husband, Matt, is now the main cook in our family.

And with all due respect to my beloved mother, I'm immensely grateful that he takes great joy in preparing meals that are both nutritious and tasty.

And I'm grateful that we have a God who cares about both nutrition and flavor.

Throughout scripture we see that God wants everyone to have enough to eat, God wants everyone to get proper nutrition.

God created the world with food enough for all beings, and through God's ongoing care of creation, God provides us with daily bread.

God shows special concern for the poor and the hungry.

God provided food in the desert for the Israelites and Jesus fed 5000 hungry people in the wilderness.

God cares about nutrition.

Yet God also cares about taste, flavor, feasting and joy.

God promises to "make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear."

Jesus came among us to tend to our physical and spiritual hunger, but also to eat and drink and be merry with us.

When the water ran out at the wedding at Cana, Jesus changed it into wine to increase people's joy, an insight our Luther intern Makayla shared with us this January.

Even now Jesus continues to come to us in bread and wine, both to feed us with spiritual nourishment and to give us a foretaste of the great, rich feast to come in heaven.

It seems God wants us to have sustenance and flavor, nutrition and taste, daily bread and joy.

God also cautions that our feasting not be at the expense of others' nutrition and others' joy, that we not consume so much of God's good gifts that others are left hungry.

Jesus sends us out to feed his sheep so that all might have enough and all might know joy.

God's concern for these things helps us see that God longs to be intimately involved in our daily lives.

God is not some distant, abstract being who stays far away in a distant heaven.

Rather God is as close to us as our taste buds and God comes to us in ways we can taste, see, touch, hear and smell.

This past week the confirmation students were studying the story of the people of Israel in the wilderness in which the people decided to make a golden calf so they could have a god they could see. But as the students pointed out, they did this right after God led them out of slavery in Egypt, right after God provided food and drink in the wilderness.

So why, as one student asked, did they think they needed something else?

Why do we search for nourishment and fulfillment in so many other ways?

Why, as the scripture reading last Sunday asked, do we spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labor for that which does not satisfy?

This Lent, God calls us to return to the God who feeds us with all that we need.

God says to us, through the words of Isaiah, "Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."

We have a God who feeds us physically and spiritually.

We have all that we need to live in God's ways.

We have all that we need to offer our lives so that all people may have enough to eat and all people may have joy.

Taste and see that God is good.

Let's share that message now by giving a honey filled candy to someone around you and saying "Taste and see that God is good."