

Sermon for Sunday, August 19, 2018 - "We Are What We Eat"

Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost
August 19, 2018
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

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

These days, we spend a lot of time thinking about the food we eat. Seems like every day there's a new diet promised to be THE answer for losing weight, preventing cancer, caring for the earth, and basically making you a much better person. (Except I'm not sure I'm a very kind person when I'm on a low-carb diet.)

We give a lot of thought to the food we consume. And that's good, because our diets do significantly affect our lives and the planet. In many ways, we are what we eat.

The scriptures also invite us to pay attention to our spiritual diets because those affect us even more. If we consume a steady stream of attack ads, other marketing, hateful speech, and violent entertainment, it's so easy for us to become angry, bitter and materialistic. In the spiritual sense, it's even more true - we are what we eat. We need to be mindful of all the content we're consuming.

Dieticians encourage keeping a list of everything we eat during the day to help us be mindful of our food choices. That's helpful advice when it comes to our spiritual diets as well.

When we wake up in the morning, worries and concerns are often the first things on our plates. We stew about what the day will bring - how we'll manage it, whether there'll be enough time, or too much empty time. Our minds gnaw away at the stressors in our lives and soon we find we're consumed by them.

And everywhere we turn, someone is promising a quick fix to feel better. If you just get the right lotion or dish soap or smart phone app, then you will be nourished, then you and your life will be balanced.

This kind of diet leaves us drained and exhausted - unable to nurture relationships, tend to community and serve others. Then, often we open the morning paper or turn on the news and consume more anxiety producing stuff. As Christians, we're called to be informed and politically engaged but too much news can make us really unbalanced.

Social media often gives us even more negativity. It can work us up 'til we feel like sharks on a feeding frenzy.

So, we look to vacations, retreats, powerful experiences hoping those will feed and nourish us. But when our daily rituals take so much out of us, we aren't really replenished with just an occasional taste of some- thing good. One healthy meal can't make up for all the days of junk food and empty calories. We need a steady diet of life-giving nourishment.

That is what Jesus gives us. Jesus Christ, and our life in Christ, provide what we need for a nourished life that can nurture others.

In many ways, Jesus provides for us the way grandmothers used to feed large extended families - the way some grandmothers still do. (I don't mean to reinforce any gender stereotypes here - my husband is the main cook in our house - but I do love the image of Jesus as a grandmother.)

With Jesus, and with grandma, there's one really big meal on Sunday and then you're sent home with food to last all week long.

On Sundays, Jesus really goes all out and puts on the spread. The entire family and all sorts of guests are invited to the table. We are drawn near to God and to all of God's beloved children - that is all people. Jesus pours himself into this feast; in fact he gives his whole self. Jesus gives of his very flesh and blood so that we might be filled with his abundant, eternal life. We are fed with God's forgiveness and healing,

That's Sunday. But then, like grandma's meal, it doesn't end there. We're sent home with good nourishment for the rest of the week.

We're sent with the wisdom, the peace, the challenges we've received at the dinner table so that we can chew on them throughout the week.

We're sent with the Bible, God's Word, and the invitation to gnaw on it and let it get into us. We're sent with the Holy Spirit so that we will always be fed by God's presence with us. We're assured that through the power of prayer we can commune with God anywhere. And we're reminded, just like a grandma says, that we are part of a family. We are not alone; we have siblings in Christ. We're also charged to live out the values of this family - to live in ways that nourish and feed others and our world, as Jesus calls us to do.

These gifts can feed us each day and provide a healthy spiritual diet. Rather than just mindlessly consuming everything that the world throws at us, prayer and scripture reading can help us sort out what we want to take in, what we want to avoid, what we're called to try to make better.

Every morning when we wake, we can begin the day with a simple prayer rather than diving into the worries. We can make the sign of the cross on our forehead to remind ourselves of Jesus' presence with us. We can take a deep breath and a moment of silence before jumping into a task as we've been doing in our meetings here at Good Shepherd. We can end each day with a practice of gratitude rather than stewing about what went wrong, what we didn't get done. We can spend some time every day chewing on God's word and not just the stressful news. God's word gives us what we need to face the news. We are assured that life prevails over death, that love is stronger than hatred, that God is present and at work amidst all the turmoil of our world. God's word gives us hope and a sense of purpose to care for a hurting world.

Beloved of God, we are what we eat, especially spiritually. Jesus has given his very self to provide us abundant life now and forever. We have all that we need to be nourished and to nurture others.

Come and eat!

