

**Preaching more than the Bread of Life**  
**Exploring lectionary meal texts in the Hebrew Scriptures**  
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Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul

“Barley was the most common grain in ancient Palestine. It survives heat and water shortages better than wheat and ripens in less time. Since barley could be raised on soil of poor quality, it was less expensive. Barley bread was the ordinary food of the poor (2 Kings 4:42; John 6:9) and was used as fodder for animals.” – John Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*, 1999

“God’s freedom calls us to self-restraint, servanthood, and justice for all. Consider the story of manna in the wilderness, a story that instructs us to “gather only enough, so that no one has too much, and no one too little” (Exodus 16:16-18). This Torah lesson – to circulate the gifts of Creation among all in need rather than concentrating them in the hands of the few – was enacted by Jesus of Nazareth in the gospel story of feeding the multitudes in the wilderness (Mk 6:35-44; Mt 14:13-21; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-13). Surrounded by hungry masses, Jesus “took bread, blessed it, broke it and distributed it” (Mark 6:41) – the exact ritual action repeated in the Last Supper and in the church’s Holy Communion.” – Ched Myers, *Sermon on Manna Economics*, 2004

“In the Bible and in contemporary geography, the wilderness is a formidable place. With so little water available, food and hydration are sketchy; weather is unforgiving, and the possibility of losing oneself is ever present. Even one’s identity is different in the wilderness. The old familiar patterns are no more; recognizable borders are nonexistent. And no one else is there to help define who one is or of what one is capable.” – Victoria Garvey, “How Elijah copes,” in *The Christian Century*, 2018

“The lectionary includes several biblical passages that personify wisdom as a regal woman. Wisdom invites the people into the wholesome life she grants. The passage from Proverbs 9 is particularly useful for Christians. The foolish woman offers stolen water and bread eaten in secret, but the church, following Wisdom who serves up bread and wine, offers water flowing freely in baptism and bread shared in the weekly Eucharist.” – Gail Ramshaw, *Treasures Old and New: Images in the Lectionary*, 2002

“Some stood up once and sat down. Some walked a mile and walked away. Some stood up twice then sat down, I’ve had it, they said. | Some walked two miles then walked away. It’s too much, they cried. | Some stood and stood and stood. They were taken for fools They were taken for being taken in. | Some walked and walked and walked. They walked the earth They walked the waters They walked the air. | Why do you stand, they were asked, and why do you walk? | Because of the children, they said, and because of the heart, and because of the bread. | Because | The cause is the heart’s beat and the children born and the risen bread.” – Daniel Berrigan, “Some,” in *And the Risen Bread: Selected and New Poems, 1957-1997*

## Preaching more than the Bread of Life Exploring lectionary meal texts in the Hebrew Scriptures

### CONTEXT

1. Pandemic food insecurity in Washington State 2021

2.2 M (7.7 M): 28% [2019: 12%]

Amazon employees: \$1.5 M; Jeff Bezos: \$25 M (Jeff Bezos' net worth: \$135 B)

Microsoft employees: \$1.5 M; Bill Gates: \$35 M vaccines (Bill Gates' net worth: \$126 B)

2. Abraham Maslow, "Hierarchy of Needs"

Physiological > Safety and Security > Relationship in community

3. God's economy of abundance in a culture of scarcity

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it (Psalm 24:1)

You open wide your hand and satisfy the needs of every living creature (Psalm 145:16)

Is not this the fast that I choose: to share your bread with the hungry? (Isaiah 58: 6, 7)

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink (Matthew 25:35)

Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them (John 6:11)

4. The psalm refrain: a summation of the Word; integration of juxtaposed readings

### STORIES AND PSALMS

**Proper 12 – July 25, 2021 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Prayer of the Day | Collect**

Gracious God, you have placed within the hearts of all your children a longing for your word and a hunger for your truth. Grant that we may know your Son to be the true bread of heaven and share this bread with all the world; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



**2 Kings 4:42-44**

42 A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." 43 But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So, he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" 44 He set it before them, they ate, and

had some left, according to the word of the LORD.

1. Famine (4:38)

2. Wondrous signs

3. First fruits: from shortage to abundance

4. Barley vs. wheat

5. Circulate God's gift of food among all (Cf., John 6:1-21)

### Psalm 145:10-18

Ant. *You open wide your hand and satisfy the needs of every living creature.* (Ps. 145:16)  
10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you.  
11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power, 12 to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. You, O LORD, are faithful in all your words, and gracious in all your deeds. 14 The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down. 15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. 16 You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing. 17 You are righteous in all your ways, and kind in all your doings. 18 You are near to all who call on you, to all who call on you in truth.

1. Fate vs. acts of mercy
2. Gracious vs. capricious
3. Presentation of the gifts vs. offering made to God?

### Daily readings flowing from Sunday

Genesis 18:1-14	<i>God eats with Abraham and Sarah</i>
Exodus 24:1-11	<i>The elders eat with God</i>
Mark 6:35-44	<i>Jesus feeds 5000</i>
Isaiah 25:6-10	<i>A feast on the mountain</i>
Philippians 4:10-20	<i>Christian generosity</i>
Psalm 111	<i>God gives food</i>

### Proper 13 – August 1, 2021 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

#### Prayer of the Day | Collect

O God, eternal goodness, immeasurable love, you place your gifts before us; we eat and are satisfied. Fill us and this world in all its need with the life that comes only from you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



#### Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15

2 The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'" 10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 12 "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning, you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'" 13 In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as

fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

1. Slavery/Pharaoh/Herod or freedom/Moses/Jesus?
2. Exodus 16:16-18: each receives what he or she needs; no one suffers lack of food
3. Peasant subsistence in 1<sup>st</sup> c. Roman Palestine: "Give us this day our daily bread"
4. "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35)

### Psalm 78:23-29

Ant. *The LORD rained down manna upon them to eat.* (Ps. 78:24)

23 So God commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven; 24 raining down on them manna to eat, and gave them the grain of heaven. 25 Mortals ate of the bread of angels; God sent them food in abundance. 26 The LORD caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and powerfully led out the south wind; 27 raining down flesh upon them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas; 28 letting them fall within their camp, all around their dwellings. 29 So the people ate and were well filled, for God gave them what they craved.

### Daily readings flowing from Sunday

Numbers 11:16-32      *God sends quail*  
Deuteronomy 8:1-20    *You will eat your fill*  
Mark 8:1-10            *Jesus feeds 4000*  
Isaiah 55:1-9            *Come and eat*  
Ephesians 4:17-24      *The new life*  
Psalm 107:1-3, 33-43    *God feeds the hungry*

### Proper 14 – August 8, 2021 – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

#### Prayer of the Day | Collect

Gracious God, your blessed Son came down from heaven to be the true bread that gives life to the world. Give us this bread always, that he may live in us and we in him, and that, strengthened by this food, we may live as his body in the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



### 1 Kings 19:4-8

4 Elijah went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. 7 The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." 8 He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

1. Why a journey?
2. Moses – Elijah – Jesus

3. Prophet of action vs. prophet of the word
4. Provision for a journey: "Whoever eats this bread will live" (John 6:51)

### Psalm 34:1-8

Ant. *Taste and see that the Lord is good.* (Ps. 34:8)

1 I will bless the LORD at all times; the praise of God shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt God's name together. 4 I sought the LORD, who answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 Look upon the LORD and be radiant; and let your faces not be ashamed. 6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble. 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear the LORD, and delivers them. 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in God.

1. Thanksgiving for rescue
2. "Taste and see" – different modes of learning

### Daily readings flowing from Sunday

1 Kings 17:1-16	<i>God feeds the widow of Zarephath</i>
Ruth 2:1-23	<i>Ruth gleanes in Boaz's fields</i>
John 6:34-40	<i>Doing God's will</i>
Jeremiah 31:1-6	<i>God promises fruitful vineyards</i>
Ephesians 5:1-14	<i>Fruits of the light</i>
Psalm 81	<i>God will feed us</i>

### Proper 15 – August 15, 2021 – The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

The Feast of Mary, Mother of Our Lord | St. Mary the Virgin [transferred to August 16]

#### Prayer of the Day | Collect

Ever-loving God, your Son gives himself as the living bread for the life of the world. Fill us with such knowledge of his presence that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life to serve you continually, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



### Proverbs 9:1-6

1 Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars. 2 She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table. 3 She has sent out her servant girls, she calls from the highest places in the town, 4 "You that are simple, turn in here!" To those without sense she says, 5 "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight."

1. Folly: stolen water, secret bread (9:13-18)
2. Wisdom: free bread and wine for all
3. In the name of Wisdom, Jesus invites us to the banquet: Eat this bread and live.

### Psalm 34:9-14

Ant. *Those who seek the Lord lack nothing that is good.* (Ps. 34:10)

9 O fear the LORD, you holy ones, for those who fear the LORD lack nothing. 10 The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. 11 Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12 Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

1. God's sees and cares for the poor
2. Wisdom calls to those who love life

### Daily readings flowing from Sunday

Genesis 43:1-15	<i>Joseph's brothers need food</i>
Genesis 45:1-11	<i>Joseph provides food</i>
Mark 8:14-21	<i>Jesus teaches about bread</i>
Genesis 47:13-26	<i>Famine even in Egypt</i>
Acts 6:1-7	<i>Deacons chosen to distribute food</i>
Psalm 36	<i>God saves humans and animals alike</i>

### Proper 16 – August 22, 2021 – The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

#### Prayer of the Day | Collect

Holy God, your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



#### Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

1 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. 2a And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors – Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor – lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. 14

"Now therefore revere and serve the LORD in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; 18 and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore, we also will serve the LORD who is our God."

1. Renewal of covenant at Sinai that concluded with a meal (Exodus 24:1-11); preceded by covenant meal between Abram and Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-24), Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:51-54) – followed by a covenant meal between God and the nations (Isaiah 25:6-8), prodigal son and father (Luke 15:11-31), Jesus and his disciples (Mark 14:22-25)

2. Other gods ask for particular things
3. Idolatry, then and now
4. “Many turned away and no longer went with him” (John 6:66)

**Psalm 34:15-22**

Ant. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.* (Ps. 34:15)

15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and God’s ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD rescues them from them all. 20 God will keep safe all their bones; not one of them will be broken. 21 Evil brings death to the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. 22 O LORD, you redeem the life of your servants; and those who take refuge in you will not be punished.

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “Viewing life from below”
2. In what do you take refuge?

**Daily readings flowing from Sunday**

Nehemiah 9:1-15	<i>Nehemiah praises God’s care for the people</i>
Nehemiah 9:16-31	<i>Nehemiah confesses the people’s sins</i>
John 15:16-25	<i>Keeping God’s word</i>
Isaiah 33:10-16	<i>The righteous will eat</i>
Ephesians 5:21-6:9	<i>A household code</i>
Psalm 119:97-104	<i>God’s word is sweet</i>

“It is a deeply meaningful sign that the entire public life and work of Jesus takes place between these two scenes: his temptation with bread in the desert and his breaking of the bread during the last supper. Only he who withstood the temptation of the bread could become the guardian of the bread for the deadly hunger of the earth. Only he could be the bread of life.” – Photina Rech, *Wine and Bread*, 1966

“When you have partaken of the Lord’s Supper, you must in turn share the misfortunes of the fellowship. Here your heart must go out in love and learn that this is a sacrament of love. As love and support are given you, you in turn must render love and support to Christ in his needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing. You must fight, work, pray, and – if you cannot do more – have heartfelt sympathy. [For] here the saying of Paul is fulfilled: Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ [Gal. 6:2].”

Martin Luther, *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ*, 1519

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