

“What’s In Your Lunchbox?”

1 Kings 19:4-8; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; John 6:35, 41-51
August 12, 2018 -- 19th Ordinary

1 Kings 19:4-8

19:4 But he himself 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." 19:5 Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." 19:6 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. 19:7 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." 19:8 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.

Ephesians 4:31-5:2 (NRSV)

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

John 6:35 (NRSV) Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 6:41-51 (NRSV) Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." {42} They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" {43} Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. {44} No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. {45} It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. {46} Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. {47} Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. {48} I am the bread of life. {49} Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. {50} This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. {51} I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Back in the 60's those metal lunch boxes that came with an 8 ounce thermos were the thing. You could get one with a depiction of Superman, or Davey Crocket, or the Lone Ranger, or the Flintstones, or The Peanuts Gang, or even the Beatles. There were lots of them. One even looked like a school bus. (Mine was a brown paper bag.) But Terry Gibbs lunchbox wasn't like any of them. His was one of those man sized ones like his dad would take down to the sea port where he was a longshoreman. You could put a whole ham in one of those things, or a watermelon. Terry Gibbs had a great Mom. Every day he had the most delectable array of items in his lunch box. He may have never eaten any of it. In the third grade there was a pretty active food trade program in the lunch room over in the 3rd grade corner. Kid's moms packed all sorts of things almost all of it homemade. You know, the usual, a sandwich and maybe an apple or a cookie. One guy, Anthony, has a thermos of Cambel's vegetable soup – every day. He sat behind me in arithmetic after lunch in a Campbels soup fog. But in the lunch room everything revolved around Terry Gibbs lunch box. Terry Gibbs mom would put in sandwiches with the crust cut off and cookies and brownies and bags of chips and all sorts of stuff like candy bars. Twinkies and HoHo's, and a can of coke wrapped in foil for insulation or he'd have iced tea in his thermos – Iced tea! He may have never eaten any of it. Terry either sold it all for a nickel an item or traded it away. For some reason Terry Gibbs favorite thing was peanut butter and jelly and he liked the ones I brought in my paper sack the best. I ate fancy ham and cheese sandwiches with no crust and brownies all the way

through the third grade. It was great. Terry Gibbs moved the next year. I often wonder what happened to him. Probably a millionaire commodities broker on Wall Street.

Surely Moms back then were concerned about the same things Moms are concerned about today. The nutritional value of those lunches in those lunch boxes or bags. But also, like now Moms are mostly concerned with putting something in there that will be eaten and not come back home. The other day I googled 'what should you put in your child's lunch box' and of course the responses were all about the nutrition children need. Here's what it said on the better health channel. "Healthy lunches and snacks are important for active children. It is important to offer healthy lunch box choices. Tips include fresh fruit, crunchy vegetables and a combination of protein, dairy and carbohydrate foods. I didn't know what a carbohydrate was in the third grade. I knew I liked bread. But eating healthy food helps children concentrate and learn. However, healthy eating choices are not always easy to make. But, I'm sure that all of **you** who are packing lunch boxes or have packed lunch boxes or will be packing lunch boxes will follow these guidelines.

Why is it important. The simplest answer is nutrition. Children need it to grow, to think, to reach potential. In answer to my query, "What should you put in your child's lunchbox?" there were 201,000,000 hits. We can be fairly sure most of them advocated nutrition. Nutrition is a big issue in the family. We want the best nutrition we can possibly afford so that young minds and bodies, and old

minds and bodies for that matter, are given what they need to be healthy, well and happy. The goal is to be healthy and happy.

Of course, Jesus wants those things for children as well as he says to us once again today, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Of course all this talk about bread isn't about bread a peanut butter and jelly sandwich at all. Feeding people was and is important for Jesus, and what a great lunch that kid's mom packed for him that day, bread and fish. Not a cookie in sight. And yes, Jesus takes it and feeds the people, but his purpose is a higher one. He feeds us, he offers us living bread so that we get to know him. Who he is. What he wants for us and from us.

Like Terry Gibbs lunch box there are many, many things in the world today, just as there were in Jesus' time, that are attractive and that aren't so good for us. My chubby third grade self needed five fat brownies a week like a hole in the head, but hey, an apple my Mom packed because it was 'good for me' or a brownie. (Balance) Hmmmm. There are many, many things in the world today that would pretend and suggest that they are 'good for us' that they are the answer to the deepest of life's questions. That they are the lunch box nutrition that will solve our problems and meet our needs and build us into better people. But then and now most of what the lunch box offers isn't exactly the best or certainly not the healthiest of choices. There are lots of things that would feed us that aren't food at all, kind of like a twinkie, but are produced to make us think it is

food we're getting. There are a myriad of breads to choose from – but only one bread of life. Only one Jesus.

The point, is that the bread Jesus offers, the food Jesus suggests, the bread of life is incomparable. There is nothing like it. Ingesting this bread, taking in Jesus, changes us, grows us, inspires us, fills us in a way nothing else can.

So here on this back to school weekend, when we've blessed backpacks and maybe some lunch boxes and certainly these children. What nutrition are we providing them for life in the world. If we resolve to do our best to get our children and to eat ourselves nutritious food, food that's good for us, how much 'bread of life' is in our diet? If food allows us to be healthy, stave off illness, grow up strong and stay strong when we've grown up, how much of the life giving, always satisfying bread of life are we consuming?

How much do we need Jesus bread in our world today? In a world of cruelty and hate and the imminent danger of one person or persons starved and bereft of the bread of life causing our children physical, emotional or spiritual harm how are we to be different. Stronger. Better. Because Jesus bread is different. The bread of life says, "Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you." The nourishment of the bread of life leads to love, not hate, forgiveness not retribution, justice not oppression, kindness not meanness, peace not war. The bread of life says, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live

in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” But be assured, the forces that will feed our children, our youth and our adults an opposing diet of prejudice and hate and enmity and anger and greed and dishonesty are formidable. And evil. And will say this is right and good. This is what Jesus says. Somehow Jesus wants you to hate the other. Jesus wants you to turn desperate people away. Jesus wants children taken from their parents. It’s ok with Jesus to lie and cheat and steal in the name of prosperity. Jesus doesn’t mind war it’s a great way to effect peace. Jesus didn’t mean everybody when he said to love your neighbor. **And they know nothing of the bread of life.**

What’s in our lunch box today? Remember Elijah, God drops off a lunch box with bread to feed his body for his journey. But what Elijah really needs as he’s fleeing the evil Jezebel is the knowledge that God is with him every day at every moment no matter his situation in life. Every day there is bread, there is food, there is the word of God to feed us, our daily bread, for the journey of life. I asked google, what should we tell our children about God today?. There were 800,000,000 hits.

God knows this journey of life is long and hard and there are many dangers lurking. If we are going to be prepared to go all the way, we have to feed ourselves on the very word of God. If the journey is not going to be too much for us, to overwhelm us, when the food is offered, when the bread is given, we have to rise up and eat. We have to separate ourselves from that which keeps us from

being close to our source of food and life and light. We have to come to be fed living bread and then be willing to go and feed.

Lunch box packers, here's how it works. Each succeeding generation takes vows at Baptism to feed the next generation. We are fed the living bread to be those who feed the spiritual nutrition for the next generation. It's natural, we want to meet the emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of our children, but just as vital is not more so in our world today is their spiritual nutrition. And you have a partner in the feeding. You have Jesus who is the bread and you have the church, his body in the world today. We're pretty good at feeding. True the whole spiritual diet isn't as much fun as baseball, or dance or art class, but it is a diet that lasts forever. Never hungry Jesus said. Never thirsty Jesus said. We, who have been fed and fed some more are called to pack the lunch box.