

Increasing our Appetite for God

Sermon notes of The Rev. Arnold Bush, Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, Tallassee, AL, August 12, Proper 14B, Second part of Sermon on 8.5.12, “The Bread that Satisfies our Hungers and appetites. “

Text: John 6:35 *“Jesus said to the people, “I am the bread of life. Whoever come to me will never b hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

I Review of key points in last Sunday’s sermon

God give human drives and cravings can become compulsions and addictions. We are wired with a God Shaped Valcuum (Poets, Genesis, Wm.James, Carl Jung) and an eternal ever lack. A description of “Alice and Adam”: Adrenaline addiction; craving for shopping, perfectionists, self-concious self-image, heavy drinkers, discontented and a “try harder philosophy”. Arnold’s playing only to win; external motivations;”workaholic”; “Performance Trap”. What are we filling our God shaped vacuum with?

II How can we increase our Appetite of God?

III Let me remind ourselves last week, I was speaking about Our deepest cravings and hungers, our most basic Needs as a Human Being.

If you had Psychology 101 in college you were exposed to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs from physiological, safty, love/belonging, self-actualization. Later criticisms of Maslow have said, there is a longing, craving for experiencing the transcendent, God.

One of the Beatitudes for MT 5 came helpful here: In the beatitudes, Jesus says " Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled .(Matt. 5:6) I love the way Eugene Peterson paraphrases

this verse in the Message translation. "Blessed are those who have a **big appetite** for God". We are here this morning because our appetite of God has been increased!!! We have an appetite for spiritual matters.... Some time in our life we were open to the experience of Christ in our life.

In the beatitudes, Jesus says " *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled* ".(Matt. 5:6) I love the way Eugene Peterson paraphrases this verse. "Blessed are those who have an **big appetite** for God".

You and I are here because we have an appetite of Christ. What is your appetite for God? Do you have a appetite for spiritual matters? What about Alice and Adam?

Maybe sometimes we lose our appetite for God and drift away from Him.

In last Sunday Gospel in the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus went to a deserted place, But when the crowds heard it, they had spiritual an appetite for Jesus, they followed him on foot from the towns. When evening came the disciples were aware of the physical appetite for food so they suggested that we send them away to the villages to buy food.

Jesus did the four acts we know in the Eucharist: He looked up the heaven to give thanks, blessed the bread and fish, broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to distribute.

I commend all who are here his summer Sunday. You also walked on foot some of the way and you will be given bread and wine to meet your appetite for spiritual food.

Listen to a paraphrase of the words of Jesus in John's Gospel the way he satisfies **our appetites**: Jesus, the Bread of Life has come down from heaven EVERY SUNDAY, EVERY SUNDAY, HERE.... The Bread we receive at the communion rail...gives us life...gives is food that does not spoil....gives us food for a quality of lifewhich is ours to enjoy.

As I look back on my life and the lives of parishioners, I notice their a periods in my life I have attempted to fill the God shaped void in my life with intense activities, too much work, want to purchase something I do not need at SAMS, HOME DEPOT or Lowes.

Some of us have phases in our life when we do not have boundaries on our compulsions. Often, I have unintentionally shut out the Holy Spirit. Closed the door to the grace God wants to give me.

What Helps to increase our Appetite?

1) **A point of view:** Two prisoners in on the third floor of a State prison looking out the Window. Each as a point of view. One looks out and sees mud in the yard left over from the rain... I see mud. The other one looks our an see a big blue sky with white clouds and wind blowing the trees as a distance.

Maybe some time in your life were always seeing mud, no grass, no trees, not stars at night. Your point of view was "life is hard.. life is tough...life is mean..... But some how something changed and your point of view was Life is a Gift. I am breathing oxygen I did not make, I am drinking water I do not pay for or expect. Somehow you point of view changed...I am having some unexpected positive experiences I do not deserve or earn.

2) Another thing that seems to help increase our appetite for God is **realizing you are in trouble**. Life is not going your way. EG 23 year old Billy has just move back into the home with his parents. He had finished college where he was known of his partying and heavy drinking, a some illicit drugs.....He was fired from his job for drinking while working, out money, college loans, no job... still drinking and a older member of the his former company. He said I think you have a drinking problem, I want you to go with me to an AA meeting. Well, Billy went and he started 10 steps of recovery. I recall the his parents saying to me how Billy has been waking each morning going to the patio to read his devotion book, and pray.. His parents said their son said without this morning devotion I can not remain sober. He said he gets insight from the bible, the time to

meditate.... All give his a sense of strength, peace, joy, direction for his life. Remember Billy does not have to perform on the athletic field, excel in his job, perform in human relationships..... His strength comes by opening himself to Jesus the Bread of Life every morning.

3) Sometimes our appetite for **God does not have to come with an existential problem** such as a divorce, loss of a job, accident causing a disability. But there are some who just grow us experiencing God Grace in their life. These are adults who grew up in Christian homes where God was part of the conversation, attendance at Church functions were the norm. They came through adolescence worshipping ever Sunday, participating in youth retreats and functions. They came into adulthood always asking the Holy Spirit to feed their souls and strengthen their hearts.

Here are more illustrations of allowing Christ the Bread to Heaven to satisfy our deepest needs:

(4) Awareness of **LACKING SOMETHING**. IS THIS ALL TO LIFE? I was visiting with a young man who was in their late twenties. He had a good selling position, like his job, enjoyed reading, enjoyed golf, tennis and skiing and movies. He said something like this to me, " You know, Father Arnold, I realize I could increase the number of calls on my customers, I could increase my commissions...I could increase this every year...There is something about life that is boring. I can beat my brains out by increasing my sales...but something was not giving me satisfaction. I am really looking for something meaningful in this life."

What is this person saying between the lines? Consuming a life of activities which do no give meaning. Going through the motions of working, playing but something is **LACKING**. He is implying I need some spiritual food that gives my life. In short he needs Jesus to fill his God Shaped Vacuum.

(4) Let's go back to **Adam and Alice**, mentioned last Sunday. I remember visiting with a couple who had been worshipping with us about a year and participating in a small group. They said something has been happening to us in the past few months. Before finding and worshipping in an Episcopal Church we were both **very unhappy people**, we were fighting all the time, over worked, spending too my wife was so unhappy she wanted to move back to the home town in South AL., running us high bills on charge cards, taking too many trips... and South Alabama, LA. They continued, " Whatever has happened in the past few months sense we have been here worshipping with this congregation. has been successful for us. **There is a satisfaction about life...** a peace of mind has come into our lives." Using our metaphor of the lesson, they have allowed Jesus, the Bread of Life to replace their **cravings**.

Poets, Philosophers, Sociologists, Psychologists, Theologians has stated in various way God has wired us with a God Shaped Vacuum. We created lacking many things. **God's desire is to fill our hearts with his presence.** When this deepest cravings and desire is not met with God living in us we will attempt to fill it with desires, cravings, strong appetites, compulsions and addictions. Lord help us not to lose our appetite for your grace and presence.

I allow Jesus to feed my soul, in conversational prayer, meditations, scripture reading. There is a direct proportion to my life of prayer and the sense of living a life overflowing with satisfaction.

Back in my early twenties, I made a commitment that I would participate in Holy Communion every Sunday in my life, yes, even on vacations or traveling. If I am on vacation or retired, I do not have to make a decision if I am going to Eucharist on Saturday. (Two Sundays ago, sleeping in a motel in Waukegan, IL I called the church telephone # in the Motel Directory) **AC I attended the 7:30 am Eucharist with 35 older adults with noAC all fans)** .The decision is not will I go to Eucharist but where will I be going. Now, over the years I have not been faithful to a lot of

commitments but I have kept up this commitment.

When I am present to Christ in the Eucharist and His comes into my life through the elements of bread and wine. I know that he is feeding the deepest **craving** in my heart. Not every Eucharist is a high spiritual chill bump experience, but **using an image of the Yeast**. He has injected me with his power in the bread and wine. This is my appetite. EG Visiting a parishioner on dialysis once a week at the hospital. Removing the toxins . Why, that is a metaphor of coming to the communion rail. My appetite with I walk into a Dairy Queen.... Blizzard with Butterfinger candy. I you are in the hospital in Tallassee or Montgomery you may get a DQ Blizzard.

Speaking of craving, coveting: The spirit of the Tenth commandment deals with this issue craving, coveting or our lacking in satisfaction. As you know the 10th commandment reads: "*Thou shall not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor wife, nor his servant, nor his maid nor yard man, nor his ox, nor this ass nor anything that is his.*"

Here is the Arnold Bush paraphrase of the Tenth commandment: You shall not covet his automobile, his servants, nanny, his plush swimming pools and immaculate yard, his three story house on the Lake Martin or Gulf of Mexico, his cabin on the Mountains in North Carolina , his boat in his garage, nor his annual trips around the world, nor his or her intelligence nor his ability to sing.

Interests/Desires..... Cravings/strong ...appetite..... compulsions
..... Additions

Prayer:.....Thanks for feeding our souls and bodies with the Bread of Life Every Sunday... Your are here to where we can offer thanks for all the blessing of life, you give a new point of view to see you gracious bounty, you come to us when we sit quietly in a home devotion, you help us realize we a LACKING IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU, AND MOST OF ALL YOUR FEED US EVERY SON A THIS ALTAR.

