



It Just Makes Sense

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Sunday School jokes always tickle me.

You know that it's fun to say "in Sunday School you are always right if your answer to any question is 'God' and 'Jesus.'"

The story goes (it just might be true) that a little boy hears his Sunday School teacher ask "What's brown and furry and lives in trees?" The boy shakes his head and says, "I know the answer is supposed to be Jesus, but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me." *It just makes sense!*

All our Bible passages this month have referred to Jesus as the Bread of Life. I asked you the beginning of this month "What are you hungry for?" The answer of course, we know, is supposed to be "God" and "Jesus."

The truth is we have all kinds of hungers. We have all kinds of things that we are hungry for. Be honest. It's okay. I'm also hungry for more meaningful friendships, more meaning in my day-to-day activities, and for a sense of focus and purpose that transcends all the bits and pieces of frenetic activity in me and around me. There has to be more.

The Bread of Life passages in John, Chapter 6 start out with people getting very hungry. Followers of Jesus say: *It just makes sense* to send these people out of here to get food. Take a look in your pew Bible, p. 97.

Jesus says, "I think it just makes sense that we feed them." "With what?" is the disciples' quick reply." Un Milagro—a Miracle. Sharing starts. There is enough to feed 5000 men plus women and children.

This church and others did something very similar, called potlucks. Don't laugh. Several people confirm that regular potlucks here started here in the early 1900's with the realization that people were going hungry right in this neighborhood. It just made sense. People could come, bring a little something, and no one needed to know how hungry anyone was. It was a way to say we know we follow the one who is the Bread of Life, and we share what we have in his name. It just makes sense to pool our food and feed people.

We're about at that point again. We have so many kindergartners right here in this neighborhood and around our whole city. A teacher told me that there are almost 100 kindergartners at Huntington. Fact: 17% of all Nebraska children are living in homes with incomes below poverty level.

So we have a start at feeding families: We fill backpacks. It just makes sense. We asked for volunteers to commit to serving on Fridays at Huntington School and you responded. We have enough for now.

What's the next step? I have heard of churches that take grills into a neighborhood and serve burgers, eat, talk and make connections.

You may already know this: the word "*Companions*" means "*sharing bread.*" "Pan" is the word in ancient languages for "bread." So we all as Companions in Christ, as followers of Jesus, we all are bread-sharers.

Something happened yesterday that I've never experienced before. We were on a tight schedule to get from Art Case's funeral here in Lincoln to the family cemetery two hours away. People from our church made sack lunches for us to take and eat on the drive. We were *companioned*. There go those followers of Jesus again: "They're giving out food!"

We live in a world that needs lots of *companions* with spiritual and physical food. In the ceremony welcoming first year students to NWU, Dean of Students Pete Armstrong said, "Not everyone is fortunate to have the opportunity for higher education. In the United States alone there are many people who are simply looking for their next meal. In fact the number of food-insecure households in the U.S. is 17.1 million."

Said Rita Lester, President of the NWU faculty, **"We are here to cultivate your capacity to do good and to do well."**

Often we talk about the world-wide Millennium goals: to alleviate hunger, poverty and disease in our lifetime, set by the U.N.. Some are on track.

E.g: Malawi's voucher program for fertilizers and seeds has turning the country into a net food exporter after decades of. Malawi needs 2.2 million tons of maize a year to reach self-sufficiency. In 2005, the harvest fell to a low of 1.2 million tons of maize. The Subsidy Program resulted in a dramatic increase to 3.2 million tons of maize in 2007. It just makes sense.

Now for hungers that are deeper and even harder to fill than physical hunger.

We often overlook a beautiful statement from Jesus: after feeding 5000+: **"Gather up the fragments that remain so that none will be lost."** (6:12)

The fragments that remain: that's us. We (who live our lives so fragmented, and often feel so left out) are like the followers of Jesus. He takes them and us deeper: "Don't

follow me just to have a full tummy. I will give you something better. The Manna God gave your ancestors wasn't enough for them. You are hungry for more."

I believe with all my heart God gives us our hungers as a way of driving us back to God with our first loyalty. It is hard to give God all our loyalty:

The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe..."

⁶⁵And he said,

"For this reason I have told you no one can come to me unless it is granted by God." ⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?"

Peter, bless him--I want a faith like his--says "No! We'll go with you. What you're doing--meeting physical and spiritual hunger--This just seems right!

"Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Jesus' hard saying is that our loyalty and our focus needs to be God. Notice how Jesus does not compel. He asks. He invites.

Peter says, "What you are doing, and saying just makes sense."

In Ephesians a later follower capsulized practical ways to live the life of faith:

¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, ...

fasten the belt of truth around your waist,
and put on the breastplate of righteousness.

¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will help you proclaim the gospel of peace.

¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith...to quench all the flaming arrows of evil. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

In the life of faith there is only one thing: to seek after the will of God,
and then to discover you have been found by the will of God.
I once was lost and now am found.
Now **it just makes sense.**

At the end of worship today we'll sing *When the saints go marching in:*
Lord, I want to be in that number, wherever God's people are
– wherever Jesus is feeding us... physically and spiritually.

There go those followers of Jesus again:
“They're giving out food!
It just makes sense.

EPISTLE SCRIPTURE EPHESIANS 6:10-17

FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF CHRIST'S POWER. ¹¹PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF EVIL.

¹²**FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST ENEMIES OF BLOOD AND FLESH,**

**BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES,
AGAINST THE COSMIC POWERS OF THIS PRESENT DARKNESS,
AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES.**

¹³**THEREFORE TAKE UP THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND ON THAT EVIL DAY, AND HAVING DONE EVERYTHING, TO STAND FIRM. ¹⁴STAND THEREFORE, AND FASTEN THE BELT OF TRUTH AROUND YOUR WAIST, AND PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

¹⁵**AS SHOES FOR YOUR FEET PUT ON WHATEVER WILL MAKE YOU READY TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.**

¹⁶**WITH ALL OF THESE, TAKE THE SHIELD OF FAITH, WITH WHICH YOU WILL BE ABLE TO QUENCH ALL THE FLAMING ARROWS OF THE EVIL ONE. ¹⁷TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION, AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD.**

***GOSPEL JOHN 6:58-69**

“THIS IS THE BREAD THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, NOT LIKE THAT WHICH YOUR ANCESTORS ATE, AND THEY DIED. THE ONE WHO EATS THIS BREAD WILL LIVE FOREVER.”

⁵⁹HE SAID THESE THINGS WHILE HE WAS TEACHING IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM.

⁶⁰WHEN MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES HEARD IT, THEY SAID, “THIS TEACHING IS DIFFICULT; WHO CAN ACCEPT IT?”

⁶¹BUT JESUS, BEING AWARE THAT HIS DISCIPLES WERE COMPLAINING ABOUT IT, SAID TO THEM, “DOES THIS OFFEND YOU?”

⁶²THEN WHAT IF YOU WERE TO SEE THE SON OF MAN ASCENDING TO WHERE HE WAS BEFORE?

⁶³IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT GIVES LIFE; THE FLESH IS USELESS. THE WORDS THAT I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE.

⁶⁴BUT AMONG YOU THERE ARE SOME WHO DO NOT BELIEVE.”

FOR JESUS KNEW FROM THE FIRST WHO WERE THE ONES THAT DID NOT BELIEVE, AND WHO WAS THE ONE THAT WOULD BETRAY HIM.

⁶⁵AND HE SAID, “FOR THIS REASON I HAVE TOLD YOU THAT NO ONE CAN COME TO ME UNLESS IT IS GRANTED BY OUR GOD.” ⁶⁶BECAUSE OF THIS MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES TURNED BACK AND NO LONGER WENT ABOUT WITH HIM.

⁶⁷SO JESUS ASKED THE TWELVE, “DO YOU ALSO WISH TO GO AWAY?”

⁶⁸SIMON PETER ANSWERED HIM,

“LORD, TO WHOM CAN WE GO? YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE.

⁶⁹WE HAVE COME TO BELIEVE AND KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE HOLY ONE OF GOD.”

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