

The Rev. Dr. Andrew D. Hagen  
Pastor, Advent Lutheran Church  
Boca Raton 561-843-7261

God Squad Article for September, 2007

Our Daily Bread

Moments after their creation, Adam and Eve are already debating that age-old question, "What's for dinner?" Naturally, in the midst of a lush garden filled with great things to eat, they chose the one forbidden fruit. Sort of like going to Whole Foods and leaving with a pint of Ben and Jerry's! While this is a story of temptation and disobedience, the most important prop is food. How appropriate! From this point on, throughout the drama of the Bible, foodstuffs will play both supporting and starring roles. And while there will be a list of "foods you cannot touch," and admonitions "not to worry about what you will eat," there is no question that the God who kicked them out of the garden has nevertheless given us a new garden that we are to plant, tend, harvest, and eat! Faith and food are intertwined from the beginning: it all began with an apple, after all.

Give thanks

I shouldn't have been surprised when my 5 year old daughter grabbed my hand at McDonald's as we sat down to eat. After all, we never begin a meal in my house without giving thanks. But at a fast-food restaurant, with people watching? She closed her eyes and started, "God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food." Okay, good and food really don't rhyme, but the words are true and form the core of our relationship between God and the food we have to eat. When God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden he gave them clothes and a hoe. Adam may do the sweating to plant his crops and tend his cattle, but the people of God all acknowledge that it is really God that makes things grow and it is only God who deserves the thanks. Isn't it funny that after a great meal at a gourmet restaurant a table may ask for the chef to come out so that they can thank him, yet never pause to give thanks to the One who made it all possible? Whether it was bread that appeared like frost on the wilderness ground for the starving Hebrew escapees or the wine that came from water jugs touched by a carpenter's hand there can be no doubt. God is the provider and deserves our thanks for every mouthful.

Eat, drink and be merry

The woman at the party was staring at me as I took a long swig from a cold bottle of beer. "I didn't know ministers were allowed to drink," she said. "How do you think we survive?" I told her. No, I didn't say that. I said, "Let me guess, Baptist?" She laughed, took the glass of wine out from behind her back and said, "How did you know?" Faithful Christians who looked around and saw how alcohol was ruining many lives (and still does) determined to fight "demon rum." Ever since Noah got off the ark, got drunk and passed out naked in his tent, something they omitted in "Evan Almighty," there has been

a struggle between responsibly using the gifts of God and abusing them. While the Bible doesn't prohibit drinking it does condemn drunkenness. While the scriptures don't recommend a starvation diet they do discourage gluttony. Yet, the upshot is not really, "All things in moderation," which sounds like a boring diet. While not every meal needs to be a feast, every meal is another opportunity to "taste and see that the Lord is good," and that life is a life-long party thrown for us by God.

You are what you eat

Taking a tour of a local synagogue I was impressed by the huge professional kitchen. "When we get together, we love to eat," laughed the rabbi. But then came the shock, "And here's our other kitchen." Equally large this kitchen enabled them to prepare their foods in a kosher fashion for their observant members. In the Torah, God not only sets his chosen people apart by giving them their own laws and beliefs but their own diet which indicates which foods and ways for preparing them that are holy. Eat holy foods and you become holy. For the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists, eat healthy foods and maintain a healthy spirit. In other words, you become what you eat. (I'm not sure what that means for the mainstay of Lutheran potlucks, tuna noodle casserole.) The most dramatic, and startling example of this is in Holy Communion when believers grow closer to their Savior by eating his "body" and drinking his "blood."

Share your bread

While the disciples of Jesus are instructed to pray to receive "their daily bread," that is just the beginning for the scriptures. We are also to be concerned for those who do not have their daily bread. In the midst of our plenty we are to remember those who are starving and to do something about it. While many of us struggle with diets, most people would be happy for our leftovers. Some of us grew up being told to finish our peas because there were people starving in China. How much better would it have been if we had been taught to set a little of our allowance aside to buy a can of peas to donate to a local food pantry? Most experts agree that God has provided enough for all people—we just haven't learned how to share it.

A Foretaste of the Feast to Come

The Bible often depicts a time in the future when God will provide a feast of mouth watering delights for all people. It shows how important food is to our faith that this is one way heaven is described. But God is good now and finds so many ways to provide for us meals that are a foretaste of the feast to come: smells, and tastes, friends and families, laughter and stories and love around an old table, at a wedding party, or on a sandy beach. What a blessing it is to view each and every meal as an appetizer for a heavenly meal that awaits us. Whether our daily bread is a quarter pounder with cheese or a filet mignon topped with crab meat, each meal could truly be a religious experience!