

In Edmonton, there is this restaurant called India Garden. And it is delicious. But they don't only get a few things really well—they have mastered it all. The Naan is warm, buttery, and covered in Garlic, and the butter chicken is both sweet and spicy, and the Aloo Gobi is remarkable... well, I could go on and on. And in fact, when I'm there, I do go on and on and on because it is a buffet—a cheap buffet at that. For \$18, including tip, you can have all the East Indian food you can imagine. When I'm there, I am satisfied. Well, actually, I am satisfied about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through my meal, and then by the time I leave, I am gorged—my pants fit a little tighter and my stomach is in pain because I have just eaten too much. And yet even after all that, I could go for dessert in a couple of hours. Satisfaction has simultaneously passed me by and remains aloof at the next meal.

This is a similar situation to the crowds in our Gospel lesson today—they enjoyed a hearty meal of fish and bread—I don't suppose there was a limit on how much they took. But when they woke up the next day they were curious as to where the wonder-chef was. They are impressed by His culinary ability, but when they find Him He makes a promise that seems too good to be true. He knows a food that won't spoil? And if they come to Him, they wouldn't ever hunger or thirst again?

I must not believe very well, then, because after service today, once I've had my coffee and sweets, I am going to return home to drink some cool water and eat some left-over pizza. I've been doing this whole coming to and believing in Christ thing for a few years now and my appetite hasn't really slowed down.

But Jesus isn't talking about these basic needs—we will always need food and water, shelter and warmth, relationships and the like—even He needed these throughout His life—He

was human just like you and me. So I don't think we ought to keep our hopes up for a single meal that ends our hunger.

Jesus is talking about our base hunger, our need that lies at the center of our humanity. This is at the core of all our other cravings. This is our need to know that we are not here by accident, that we have been created and are loved and not alone, and in fact simply to be loved. This need is to be in a right relationship with the true God, but because in the fallen state of the world and humanity, we don't recognize this need—we presume sin and brokenness is the natural and proper state of things.

But Jesus doesn't wait to give them what they really need until they've got that figured out—He meets their basic needs in order to teach them what will truly satisfy them.

He draws them in with a lot of bread, a miracle by which He hoped they would recognize who He was and what He offered them. It is this lasting bread is what He invites them to strive for, to labour throughout their lives towards. This is what their hearts ought to be focussed on, what their bodies and minds should crave just as their soul does, whether or not they recognize it.

And the people are pretty quick to get on board with this, but I think they're still mostly thinking about rye bread (maybe pumpernickel). Bread that doesn't perish? Jesus, do you know how easy life would be if our basic needs were just met, and we didn't need to work for it? We would be able to relax and be with our families and actually just enjoy life!

They are willing to put the effort into getting truly satisfied. We all are, I think. This is why we work so hard at getting the promotion, or planning the perfect meal for guests, or whatever else we put a lot of energy into. There's something inside us that recognizes that we get a lot of satisfaction from these activities.

Both inside and outside the Church, there are ways that we try to find satisfaction in our lives. Outside the church, there are too many religions to count, all of which offer some form of wholeness and purpose—and they must meet some human need, otherwise they wouldn't survive. But they don't solve our deepest desires. Or else people switch from job to job, from diet to diet, from relationship to relationship, but none of them are able to quell the uneasiness that exists inside them.

And unfortunately, because we remain sinners, that uneasiness doesn't disappear once you're a Christian. We still try and settle our soul in the church—either by keeping a perfect family or abstaining from this sin or that, or by getting so many members in the door or by reading our bible x number of minutes a day.

Now, a lot of these works are actually pretty great—we might not always do them with the right intention, but even then, God is working through us to build up His kingdom and share His grace. But these are not the works of God that Jesus has in mind.

He is thinking of only one work of God to be done—and it is of God in the sense that it is God's work to do. It is God who creates the belief, the faith, the trust, that satisfies the hungry soul. Just as it was truly God who sent the manna to the Israelites and provided water from the Rock, it is God who sent the true Bread of life, the incarnate Son of God to give of Himself that they World may be satisfied. And you and I didn't miss out on this gift because we weren't present the day after the feeding of the 5000—though if my memory serves me, I was personally napping through that day after such a large meal.

No, the Bread of Life continues to come to us everywhere we find Christ. In His Word, when you heard it read here today, and when you read it at home, and while you are hearing it preached for you, Christ, the living bread is whom you are feasting on by faith. This spiritual

eating restores the soul and sustains it. This is by the same act of God that He will graciously be doing in Gordon, Lindsay, and Garnet's baptism today when the Word mixed with Water is received by faith and works new, whole life, and when you come forth to receive the body and blood of Christ—there you receive Christ physically and spiritually, where you are satisfied with Him in nearly every way possible.

So, tell me. How satisfied are you? I know that by worldly standards, I am not always satisfied. Sometimes after the confession and absolution, I feel like the world has been stolen from my shoulders. Other days, I don't know that I notice a difference. And I know that when Christians mourn, it doesn't always look different from the world—I'm not sure that it has to. Our grief is not satisfied by this heavenly joy always—though sure, we sometimes feel immense peace amidst our sorrow. And when we are in pain, we are not met with immediately relief and healing—sometimes, sure, but that's definitely not the norm. And Christ hasn't promised that. And when a person is hungry and they are not able to get enough food for both themselves and their children or parents, Christ's Gospel doesn't magically fill their stomachs. Their hunger persists, and satisfaction seems rather illusive.

And yet, the Gospel satisfies. It has to, because Christ has promised us this. It satisfies us because of who Christ is—and He isn't primarily a grocer and chef, nor primarily a physician or a grief counsellor. He is primarily the Son of God who took it upon Himself to be the saviour of mankind.

And as we approach Christ in this way...(quotes from Apology).

As we know that Christ is our crucified and risen Lord, we know that God cares for us and hears us when we ask for food, for friendship, for a direction in life. He might not answer right away—and it probably won't be as we expect. But He certainly hears us and for Christ's

sake is joyful to receive our prayers, and thus we do not need to turn to other idols. We can trust the way God ordains the World to work—from farmers working the soil to make sure that we get food for today to politicians working (whether we agree with them or not) to protect us, to strive for righteousness, and to lead the people. These are not idols we worship in place of God, but the means of God by which we receive His goodness.

And as we ask Him to care for us in this way, we are exercising our trust in Him. And even when are not actually trusting in Him for all our needs but instead just for a selfish need, He directs us back to His Gospel where he provides and satisfies for our needs.

And let us do that frequently. At home and at Church, let us turn to Christ the living bread, sent to us to quell our deepest needs. We find Him in His word where He proclaims His love to you and His care for your entire being. He truly knows what you cannot go without, and He beckons you, come and be satisfied.

And so we pray, Lord, give us this bread always, so that the peace, which passes all understanding, would guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.