

Eat Local!
Sermon on September 2, 2018
Creation season 1

A reading from: Exodus 16: 1-7.13-21 Manna in the wilderness

Psalm 111 A prayer of Thanksgiving for Gods faithfulness

The gospel reading: Luke 12:13-21 Bigger barns?

And Matthew 6:25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. ... So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?'. ... Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

“Eat local” slogan...everywhere - a fad?

Actually, the concept of eating local is ancient...its what people always did because they had no other choice...

its what poor people in the world still do when they can not afford imported foods or meat or vegetables brought from far away.

There are exceptions- such as when the local people in Zambia and Tanzania are forced to drink imported sugar sweetened beverages like soda and coke because they are cheaper than fresh water- .

In general, people have always eaten local first, and supplemented with imported delicacies as they could afford.

Coffee and Tea, sugar, spices, fruit....except that in

the last 50 years “local” became the exception: Cheap fossil fuel and advanced cooling technology has allowed the transport by road and air of meat, vegetables, fruit and even dairy products. And at the same time this transport over large distances created the climatic conditions the planet and we are now suffering from.

My beloved bananas a cause of global warming? My grapes from South Africa contributing to climate catastrophe? Sadly the answer is, yes- in part. Individual growers and farmers have been struggling for decades while large corporations build bigger and bigger barns and warehouses to produce cheap food for the export into our supermarkets

So that's where the cry “eat local!” comes from. Buying local helps the local economy, the small farmers and producers, and will help the earth if the local food is produced in an organic and earth friendly way.

The cry “eat local!” resonates this fall season, season of nature and creation, harvests and Thanksgivings.

And our biblical story echoes that: God provides – food what? local food.

Tired, tired, sore feet, cranky moods, the Israelites

journey into the arid country of the Sinai peninsula is no picnic.

Out of Egypt – yes, escaped from bad conditions, unpaid labour, abuse, - but to what? “Are we there yet?” the children wail, and the adults mutter against their leaders Moses and Aaron. *“If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”*

Wow. They are cranky. How quick we forget. You sat around pots of meat and ate all the food you wanted? Really? Perhaps your present discomfort colours your memories of Egypt in a bit of a rosy light?

So Moses confronts his people by saying: Don't murmur against me- God brought you here, and God will provide.

And something very God- like and interesting happens: Local food appears for the exhausted Israelites:

“A fine flaky substance” with a taste like honey would be found on the ground in the morning. It appeared like dew and disappeared in the heat of the day. **When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.**

It was sooo local- they had never seen it before.

What was it, really? No one knows. There is a sugar like substance that drips from trees in that region, in fact there is a place in Sicily where farmers harvest a substance they call manna, crystallized sugar drops that drop from a local tree that can only be found in that particular region- but what matters to me is the word Moses speaks to them: What is it?

, **“It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.**

Manna is God's heavenly gift for this place, this journey, and for this day. “Give us this day our daily bread “Jesus taught us to pray, and that prayer links back directly to the Manna his Jewish ancestors enjoyed.

Everyone was to collect only for that day. You could not store it and hoarders were punished by the manna going bad-a terrible stench. God-like Food indeed: Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer (a dry measure, say a cup)] for each person you have in your tent.”

17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little.18 And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone

had gathered just as much as they needed.

They get local food that is so fresh it can not be stored, local food fresh every morning, and local food that distributes itself in a miraculous way so that everyone gets as much as they need – not as much as they think they need – or want. Divine Food indeed.

After the manna, the bread of heaven, comes the protein

“That evening quail came and covered the camp”, those little birds that make a wonderful meal if you kill them, and give dainty little eggs if you let them live...quail.

So the people have bread and meat- local desert food, provided by God's mercy.

How I wish we had that now. How I wish the whole world had Manna. Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me, till I want no more...

God is good, we say with the scriptures, every day God is good. But how do the people in Sub Saharan Africa feel?

And what does this “God is good” mean for us in 2018, in the modern world? I do not have to tell you

that millions of God's people are starving in Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan and Nigeria.

I do not have to tell you that the only manna and quail from heaven they will see is the bread and protein that gets flown in by airplanes or brought in by aid organizations over land.

I do want to tell you how I believe God provides- today -still provides:

For that, come with me into the gospel story:

There is a man who has a large successful harvest.

His barns are already large but they are not big enough for this years harvest.

Wonderful. Result of a great co-operation between this farmer and divine fruitfulness in the earth.

So...

What is he to do? He is like a large corporation with a surplus of corn, wheat, soja beans or whatever..he knows that if it is all put on the market-what will happen? The price will drop.

How great that would be for aid organizations, how like manna for the poor. But no, corporations can't have that, so they store until there is a bad harvest and then they make good money.

And, Jesus says, the man's thinking goes along just on that line: What can I do for myself? How can I reap the benefit of this harvest? I will build bigger storage barns, and then I will have all the money I need for the rest of my life. I can even stop working; I can focus on enjoying my food! eat and drink to my hearts content...I, I, I, me me me...

Hi reasoning seems totally normal in our day and age (of rampant consumerism and capitalism) – but Jesus calls him “a fool”.

An early death happens to await this person, and he dies “poor in the sight of God”

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

How does God provide food for the hungry?

1) By teaching us about the dangers of greed; by teaching about the poverty that manifests in thinking only about self and comfort . By teaching love – as we see in Jesus

2) God provides food for the hungry through those who are “rich towards God”. Farmers who share, individuals who volunteer and fundraise, agencies who teach sustainable crop growing, and those rare

courageous politicians who protect the independence and livelihood of small growers.

The Canadian Food grains Bank is an institution that does fill storage barns with food – but it is intended to relieve the hunger in the areas I mentioned.

Across Canada we have hundreds of groups who fund raise for education and grow produce so others can be fed.

In Wolfville we have the Valley growing project, (blueberries and pumpkins) for the CFGB

In Truro we have Harvest for Hunger Ns –(corn)

Their goal is a world without hunger. Can you imagine a more Christian goal?

It is not wrong to store food, resell it , fill a barn with surplus...its all about for whom and why!

3)

In the light of food shortages that are to increase as the climate gets worse I ask myself: will there be Manna for humanity?

I don't know. The very nature of Manna is that you don't control what there will be tomorrow. But I do believe that God is good.

God provides the blackberries that grow along the old rail line; the mushrooms in the woods. A frost may have killed the apples on some people's trees, but others have still enough to share. The fish in the ocean were once abundant. Had human greed not interfered we would still have more than enough for all.

You fools. Says Jesus . You fools, humanity.

In the light of the food crisis that will come to us all the place we find ourselves in is the place where we will look for “food from heaven”. What we eat here mindful of the creator's goodness, can become a profoundly spiritual experience.

This valley produces abundantly.

And so in our daily living

may want to ask ourselves:

Will it be ok to have enough,

or will even we always seek more than enough?

What is “enough” for you. For me?

Since we are all inclined to hord food & stuff--

How do we know what is enough?

Perhaps changed behaviour begins with the wisdom

of even asking these questions, not once but regularly..

Just asking... would it be perhaps “enough” to have Nova Scotia wine (even if it can be a bit “tart”) and locally grown herb tea?

Can we wean ourselves from the South African grapes and Nicaraguan bananas, the Mexican coffee and the Australian wine?

Just asking...what is “enough” or what is “just as much as everyone needed” ?

Eating local today may help avert the worst food problems in the future.

While we savour the fall berries and the fish ,produce from land and sea.

I might even pray: “God, if you really want me to - maybe I will be able to develop a taste for dulse.. ...

Amen.

