



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

April 18, 2010
Third Sunday of Easter
Mary Newbern-Williams

RCL: Acts 9:1-6(7-20); Psalm 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19
LM: Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19 or 21:1-14

The Easter celebration of new life in Christ Jesus continues with the story of Saul on the road to Damascus. Acknowledged and feared as a persecutor of Christians, Saul is traveling with some companions when he experiences the changing power of Jesus Christ. Three days later Saul not only changes in heart and soul but his life is changed forever. He is destined to become Paul, preacher and faithful servant, leading many others to Jesus Christ. Paul provides spiritual nourishment to churches, teaches new believers in many cities all about their work, and never wavers in his faith.

Nourishment comes in many forms. It can be spiritual or physical, and both forms of food prepare the body and soul for life's journey. Spiritual nourishment prepares the soul for life eternal. That is the transition Paul experiences during his three days without food or drink. As one who fasts, I can attest to the physical as well as the spiritual experience in that discipline. Paul's heart, body, and soul are prepared for the journey as ambassador for Christ.

The food that believers provide for others is spiritual as well as physical. While churches and other helping organizations often provide food, shelter, and financial assistance to people in need, they also offer opportunities for people to develop faith. During my time as an intern with a homeless shelter, I conducted Bible study, led Sunday worship services, and met individually with our clients. Most of them had grown up in churches or other religious entities and were more than open to prayer, study, and inspirational dialogue. The spiritual aspect of the work was as important as the food we provided. When one's physical hunger has been satisfied, opportunities to satisfy spiritual hunger are better accepted.

Through Paul's teachings Jesus satisfied the spiritual hunger that many experienced during that era. Paul traveled to preach and teach, and he assisted many churches. Even during his imprisonment, he encouraged God's people. Our work is to continue that encouragement even when faith falters or spirits are saddened. When helping people with economic and physical needs, we can also boost their and our spirits by letting them know that there are those who care. Following Christ's example is the most



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powerful way to help others. When people witness Jesus' light and love in the way we live and serve others, it inspires, encourages, and enables them to take a second look at the model. Second looks often result in followings.

In Jesus' third appearance to the disciples, he feeds them physically and spiritually. Jesus makes certain that his disciples catch more fish than they need, bolstering their confidence and caring for their important physical needs. Then Jesus prepares the fish and charges Peter to "feed my sheep"—to care for the needs of others. Among the different ways to nourish people, Jesus chooses to care for the whole person. He feeds the body and the soul. When we feed others in a holistic manner, we show concern for their bodies, their hearts, and their souls. When we share the Good News of Jesus Christ, we care for the soul. That Good News comforts the soul because it declares that we are forgiven and loved unconditionally, and we learn that eternal life is a promise through Christ Jesus. That timeless message still encourages us for the post-Easter days ahead.

Children's Time [Larry Hollar]

Consider talking about eating (which we all love to do, and do well in our church dinners!) and fasting. In today's verses Paul spends three days without food and drink—and he's not the same afterward. We need food for our bodies to be healthy (underscore that to make clear that fasting is not a spiritual eating disorder or an excuse for self-abuse). But the Bible talks about people going through important times (Elijah, Jesus, Paul) when being away from food has special meaning. Food has a vital place in our lives, and God wants all people to have enough food to live healthy lives to serve God.

Musical Suggestions [Larry Hollar]

Tú Has Venido a la Orilla/Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore—

The Presbyterian Hymnal 377

I Saw the People Gathered—*Banquet of Praise* 151

Time Now to Gather—*The Faith We Sing* 2265

Jesus Calls Us, o'er the Tumult—*The New Century Hymnal* 171, 172



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