

Sermon August 5, 2018

Rev. Mark Moline “I am the Bread of Life”

“For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life.”

Today’s Gospel presentation is a continuation of last week’s sixth Chapter of John’s Gospel, and thus continues that theme of the principle Christian *categories* of eternal life vs. spiritual death. “Life or death!”

As I said last week, our faith is not all about “good behavior” vs. “bad behavior” or even ‘punishment and reward.’

Jesus is not coming to town to find out who’s been naughty or nice. That was Santa Claus. Let’s not confuse the two. Jesus was the one who said, “I came that they may have *life*, and have it abundantly.”

John introduces his writing by proclaiming, “What has come into being in God - was life,” and “For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son. He gave the Son that life - so that whosoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

God is the source of life, God is the sustainer of life, God is the restorer of life.

In Genesis we read: **“And then God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a *living being*.”**

We hear a lot about the Apple Tree in the Garden of Eden. But when God planted His garden, He planted **two very special trees** in the center of the Garden. The one tree with the forbidden fruit was – of course not an apple tree — scripture makes no mention of apples - – rather that first tree was the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*. In fact, just to touch that tree meant death. So we might consider it, ‘the tree of death.’

The other tree – the second one we often take for granted and pay far less attention to - was the **“Tree of Life.”** (It’s all there in the third chapter of Genesis) -- Adam and Eve had full access to that tree of life and its fruit – that is until they ate the fruit of the tree of good vs. evil and then God tossed them out of his garden. Then God set a guard of Angels armed with a flaming sword to prevent Eve and Adam’s return to the tree of life. They were cast out to face death.

God had created life – humankind with its God-given free-will had snubbed his gift and God was greatly grieved.

God later told Moses, “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendents may live.”

Choose life – we have a free will – we always have a God Given choice. God is the source of eternal life and we can choose to be the recipients of that gift – or like Adam, we can simply reject the gift of eternity. Life is the choice, === faith, and love are the process.

Of course Holy Scripture is full of passages about eternal life.

Both Moses and Jeremiah spoke on behalf of God - about life. The Psalms celebrate life, the Proverbs advise of life, Ecclesiastes teaches life, Hezekiah wrote of life, and Christ surrendered life so that we might reclaim it.

Christ died on a third tree we call the cross, and on that tree He personified our choice between the two trees in the Garden – our choice between life and death. On the cross he bridged the Gap between life and the knowledge of good and evil. The cross which was the tree of death became the tree of life for us--- once again we have access to eternal life – if we so choose.

When one's God dies – his or her faith has no where to go except to life. This is especially true when He dies so that we may have life. This is especially true when He then rises victorious over death.

In closing, When we go to the very last Chapter in the Bible – to John's Revelation – we catch up once again with that tree of life.

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb - through the middle of the streets of the city. **On either side of the river is the tree of life.** Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree.”

Let us wash our robes in repentance, confession and forgiveness, let us wash our robes in the holy sacraments, let us wash our robes in love, let us wash our robes in faith, let us wash our robes in *life*!