

John 6:22

Title: I am the bread of life

Does anyone here remember Hobo Kelly? Hobo Kelly was a favorite TV show back in the late 60s. She'd talk and draw pictures on the screen with the help of a butterfly named Buttercup. And the pictures would come to life. I remember her putting on her big magic glasses. These glasses gave her the ability to look back into the TV cameras and see all the kids who were sitting in front of the TV. By today's standards, that is just this side of creepy. But back then it was so cool. She would say "HI" to all her viewers... by name no less. Hi Sherry, Hi John... For the record, in all the years that I watched Hobo Kelly she never said HI to me!

Today I would ask you "What do you see this morning?" Do you have a pair of magic glasses which allow you to see special things? I say "you do!" Well, not a physical pair of glasses which can magically show you who is watching TV. But we have been given the ability to see things which normal people do not. That which is seen with our earthly eyes, see only half of what is really there.

For example underneath this very ordinary looking group of people is the priceless treasure of the Church. When we have communion underneath the very ordinary looking bread and cup, one finds nothing less than the very Body of Christ that He offered once on Calvary's cross for us; and the very Blood that He spilled to redeem a world. Just bread and wine? No. That's all we see, true enough, but the treasure that is hidden beneath the external form is far greater, far more wondrous.

In our Gospel lesson Jesus says

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

In the Lord's supper,... in Communion,... we are confronted by "that bread of life." And when this bread is eaten in faith, it brings eternal life. The Lord's supper is a thing of power. It is a miracle. At the Lord's supper, we come face to face with Jesus Christ.

To the outside world, this is crazy. The world says

"When you go to communion"

“You don’t really see human flesh?”  
 “You don’t really taste Christ’s blood?”  
 “That’s like, cannibalistic, or something.”

It is here that we see the difference between seeing something with the eyes of the human body, and seeing something with the eyes of faith. Where I am blind to the encounter with my physical eyes, I can see a real encounter with Christ with the eyes of faith. We confess that the very presence of the glorified Jesus is at our communion table. There will be no burning bush or an angel of God standing there speaking the words of institution. We will not visibly see the wine or bread supernaturally transform themselves into blood and the body of Jesus Christ. Yet Scripture tells us that in some divine manner, Christ's body and blood ARE given to us, that in some divine manner the forgiveness of sins IS offered, and the reconciliation with God, our maker, has occurred. When we partake of the Lord’s supper we are confronted by Jesus in His glory, exercising his divine authority to offer the forgiveness of sins to us. It is a source of God's power that simply requires that you believe the words "given for you for the forgiveness of sins"... We believe because Jesus said so. That which I am blind to with my physical eyes, I see with the eyes of faith. Jesus offers himself as the bread of life. All we must do is receive it.

Theologically speaking the Lord's Supper is an objective experience. “Objective” means that – “its effect and power comes from outside us, therefore, its power does not rely on us. Why is the fact that “it is objective” important? Two reasons. The first reason is that because it is objective, its power does not rely on us. **The power is from God. It is the power which maintains our relationship with God.**

**For example, if the power depended on us, our relationship with God would be temporal. Have you ever met someone** who you seemed to get along with. Everything seemed to click together. It seems like this was a friendship that you really wanted to grow and to last. But for some reason your paths in life split. Oh, you tried very hard to maintain the relationship through phone calls and letters. But then you find the task of maintaining the relationship lowering in priority. Soon the strength of the friendship wanes, and the terrific friendship that you counted on comes to naught. And you are left with a empty sorrow or regret over a relationship which neither lasted nor ended in a bang, **but simply dissipated like a cloud of smoke. That is how earthly relationships are powered.** This is what would happen with our relationship with God if it relied on our power. By our own power, our relationship with

God, would be subject to our feelings. When we felt like following God, we would follow him. When we didn't feel like following God, we wouldn't. Consequently, our confidence in our salvation, would be as ephemeral as dust in the wind.

But the good news is that our relationship with God and our salvation does not rely upon us! The Lord's Supper was instituted by God alone and its validity stands upon His promise alone. God's offer of love, God's offer of membership in His kingdom, comes from God alone, who is eternally faithful. It is objective. God has given us a means of maintaining our relationship with Him, which is independent of our **changeable human** feelings. The nourishing power of God's forgiveness, grace and love, is received through faith. All we need do is believe the words which he gives us, "given for you for the forgiveness of sins". Because the Lord's supper is an objective experience, God has given us a means of maintaining our relationship with Him. God has given us the power to believe we will always be his children.

This is especially important in times of trouble, or when we feel weak in our spiritual walk, when we feel sinful and not worthy of God's forgiveness. During these times the Lord's supper can be a wonderful support.

Sometimes we may feel like God is at the top of a slide and we are slipping downward faster and faster. No matter how hard we try to hold on to the sides, we continue to slide down. Under these circumstances there are some people who don't feel worthy to take communion. They think they haven't kept their end of the bargain up, with God. As a result they think that they should stay away until they get their act together.

Quite the contrary. These are precisely these times when we need communion the most. There is a power in communion to support us. As we find ourselves slipping down the slide of life, we find God there ready to catch us at the bottom. So when you feel your spirit flagging, when you feel your will losing the battle against the world and the flesh, that is precisely when you need the sacraments, the most.

Because it is an objective means of grace, it does not require your feelings or the strength of your obedience. It is a source of God's power which simply requires that you believe the words "given for you for the forgiveness of sins." Because the Holy Spirit works through word and sacrament, there is a power

in it, not only to strengthen a weak faith, but also to help us grow spiritually. Our spirit is nourished by the word and sacrament. Where we do not have the power to cause our spirit to grow, the Lord's supper does. Where we cannot "will" our spirits to become more Godly,... attending communion can bring change.

It's like raising children. We do not make children grow. All that we can do is provide nourishment for the child's mental and physical growth. We do not guide the cellular development. We do not determine the final height and weight, or its eventual IQ. We do not make the child grow. Only God does.

We can, on the other hand, stunt its growth. We can stunt its growth by denying proper nourishment,... Similarly, in the spiritual world we do not control our own spiritual growth. This is under the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot "will" ourselves to grow spiritually. But, though we cannot "will" ourselves to grow spiritually, we can stunt our growth, by not providing the proper spiritual nourishment.

One of the sources of  
     this spiritual nourishment  
     is the Lord's Supper.

We can make sure that our spirit receives the proper spiritual nourishment to grow,... by exposing ourselves to the presence of God's grace... in particular, by exposing ourselves to His presence in His word and Sacrament. That is how we grow spiritually. That is the source of spiritual maturation, and as our spirit matures, so does our ability to walk in God's ways. It is precisely for this reason that those feeling weak in faith, for those struggling in their walk with Jesus, should come to the Lord's table. The Lord's supper is a thing of power. The Lord's supper is a miracle.

Finally, a byproduct of the Lord's supper, a byproduct of our renewed relationship with God is our renewed relationship with each other. As a sacrament, the Lord Supper reminds us of our baptism when we were first adopted by God. We are a family in the true sense. The Lord's Supper reminds you that you are a member of the family of God. Being part of the family of God doesn't mean you will have perfect relationships with each other. In fact, it means just the opposite. When there are problems in our Christian relationships, it does not mean that we or they are no longer part of the God's family. Rather it means that if you are having problems with

another member of your spiritual family, it is imperative that the relationship be repaired.

Frequently eating together as a family strengthens a family, not only physically but relationally. Likewise the Lord's Supper is truly a family meal whose purpose is to nourish our spirits and to reconcile our relationships, both our relationship with God and our relationships with each other. That is the importance of the Lord's supper. That is the gift which God brings to us.

God calls us to his table, to drink his wine, to eat his bread, to receive Jesus Christ to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. So that we might believe, so that we might grow and so that we might live in harmony with one another as the body of Christ.

May the presence of Christ in the Lord's supper, always nourish you always strengthen your faith and bring harmony in your life.

Amen.