

2022 10 02 – Gratitude for Food

Scripture: Exodus 16:10-21
Mark 6:35-44
Acts 2:44-47 (The Inclusive Bible)

Inside a small white apartment building in downtown New Glasgow, N.S., residents sat in the dark for days and ate peanut butter sandwiches as the food in their fridges and freezers spoiled.

Post-tropical storm Fiona devastated their community, and loss of electricity and telecommunications cut the residents of the area off from the rest of the province.

"I never thought it'd be in anything like this," said Brenda Priest, one of the residents of the building on the corner of Dalhousie and Temperance streets. "I thought it was just going to be like a storm we're gonna have then it was going to be over. But here we are. We're suffering."

Priest said she stocked up on food before the storm and keeps a freezer full in case her kids or neighbours need anything. With no generator, she estimates she will be throwing out close to \$400 of food. Since her family is on a fixed income, the loss they're facing is devastating.

"You know, even if the next-door neighbours runs out of anything we have food there for them. But now we're scared to death," Priest said. "That's going to all go bad. And how am I supposed to replace that when my

husband's only on the pension?" <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/fiona-low-income-nova-scotia-struggling-to-restock-food-1.6599054>

This story was posted on the [CBC website](#) on Thursday. It was one of many stories about the hardships faced by the residents of our Maritime Provinces due to last weekend's storm. Stories that remind us of the fragility of our food supply and the need to be ready for the possibility of long term power outages. What would you do if suddenly your fridge and freezer were empty?

This is a reality for people in our own community even without the aftermath of a post-tropical storm. The rising cost of food and fuel has left many in this city without the resources to buy milk, bread and other basic staples. This is especially true in the last half of each month. The food bank helps, but it is not enough. I have had several people in my office over the last few months looking for assistance.

All of today's scripture readings talk about food. In Exodus we read about the plight of the Israelites in the wilderness. It's was about six weeks since they had escaped from slavery in Egypt. Those six weeks had been spent travelling in the desert. The people were hungry and had begun to complain to Moses and Aaron about the lack of food. So Moses gathered everyone together and shared the following words from YHWH, "in the evening you will eat meat, and in the morning you will have your fill of bread. Then you will know that I, YHWH, am your God."

Miraculously, quail appeared that evening and in the morning there was a light, flaky substance on the ground that they called “manna.” It was white, like coriander seed, It could be crushed and boiled or baked to form a thin bread with the taste of honey. One of the hardest lessons the Israelites had to learn was not to hoard the manna but to trust that it would appear each morning. Many scholars have tried to figure out why the quail suddenly appeared (was it their time of migration) or what the manna was actually made of. Even if there was a natural explanation for the appearance of this food, it was still, in every respect, a gift from YHWH, from God.

In the same way, many have tried to explain the feeding of the five thousand. This is a story that is found in all four gospels. How is it that five loaves and two fish were able to feed five thousand people, or even more incredible, five thousand families. Did Jesus create the food out of thin air or was it rather a miracle of sharing? Is it possible that other food had also been brought by the people and when one person began to share, others followed suit. Maybe it was more like a potluck dinner with more food than those present could even dream of eating. Either way, the food was still a miracle, a gift from God.

Our last scripture reading is a story from the beginning of the early church. It was only a few months since Jesus’ death. The apostles were still in Jerusalem and their new followers had begun a communal lifestyle. It is described as follows:

Those who believed lived together, shared all things in common; they would sell their property and goods, sharing the proceeds with one another as each had need. They met in the Temple and they broke bread

together in their homes every day. With joyful and sincere hearts they took their meals in common, praising God and winning the approval of all people.”

The sharing of meals was obviously a key component in the spiritual life of the early church. What seems to be common amongst all three of these readings—Hebrew, Gospel and Acts—is the importance of taking only the food that you need and sharing the rest with others. In each case God provided enough, it was just a matter of making sure that everyone had their share.

The news from the Maritimes also included stories of communal eating and the sharing of resources. For example,

The Cape Breton Malayali Association made enough food to feed upwards of 200 people who were displaced from the storm. They cooked up a meal from their home state of Kerala in southern India — green moong dal — a curry dish made with lentils and rice. The hot food was a welcome sight for about 50 people who gathered on Charlotte Street in Sydney, N.S. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/cape-breton-international-community-steps-up-to-feed-displaced-people-1.5491529>

Another wonderful example of generosity is Brenda Priest, the woman in New Glasgow who had lost all the contents of her freezer. The reason she had so much frozen food, was not just for her own use, but because she always had extra for family and neighbours who might be in need. Brenda knew that many people were hurting even before Fiona hit.

Here in Swift Current those in need can go to the Salvation Army Food Bank for a monthly hamper. But these days even that is not enough. Here at First United we usually have over a \$1000 worth of Coop Gift Cards available at the beginning of the year. I give these out as carefully as I can, but this year there's a good chance we're going to run out.

So many of us take a full fridge and freezer for granted. But that is not the case for many in our community, in our country and around the world. Today, as we take part in our own sacred meal, may we give thanks for the food that we have and remember the importance of sharing with those who are in need. Let us be grateful for God's gift of food.

May it be so. Amen.