

John 6:24-35

Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes me will never be thirsty."

"Bread of Life"

In a society that almost demands life at double time, speed and addictions numb us to our own experience. In such a society it is almost impossible to settle into our bodies or stay connected with our hearts, let alone connect with another or the earth where we live.

(Jack Kornfield from Buddhist Wisdom Saying, July 26)

While sitting on an outdoor restaurant bench, I overheard a young girl talking about the lunch that she was about to receive. With a happy voice she exclaimed to her friends: "I'm so glad to be getting a hot dog! I've been staying with my health nut aunt and uncle for a week and all I've been eating is fruit, vegetables, and brown bread. No junk food at all." As she spoke, I sighed. I sighed with cravings for my own comfort food of spaghetti, ice cream, and cheese. I sighed with good intentions in my own health food journey. I sighed with the rejection pain from my nephews when I gave them carob candy bars at Easter instead of chocolate. I sighed with a lofty thought on our human condition: O how we desire food that satisfies our immediate cravings but spoils our chances for life long health of our soul as well as the common good, common wealth, and well being of all. My sigh was long--- but the bite into my gigantic lobster roll with french fries on the side was deeper.

Later that week I had a flashback of my comfort food sigh when I read this article in Sojourners Magazine (July 2009, p. 9). *DIANA M. WIKLINE* wants to bring "people to God's table, one cookie at a time." In 2007, she founded the California-based, family-run business *The Jesus Cookie Company*. *Made with evangelical ingredients . . . Wikline's product comes ready to bake.* What's this? I mused. Fast faith food for the soul? The promotion for the cookie read:

THE JESUS COOKIE.

Each of the ingredients in these cookies represents Christ's life, which was given for us. Please follow along and see how simple it can be to know Jesus Christ personally.

The coconut represents the straw in baby Jesus' bed (Luke 2:7).
 The spices represents the gifts from the wise men (Matthew 2:11).
 The sugar represents his sweet presence (John 3:16).
 The black jellybeans represents sin (Romans 6:23).
 The red jellybeans represent Christ's blood shed for us (Ephesians 1:17).
 The yellow jellybeans represent forgiveness of our sins (Matthew 6:12).
 The white jellybeans represent that through Him, we are cleansed of our sins (Isaiah 1:18).
 The green jellybeans represent God's jealousy (Deuteronomy 5:9).
 The oats and flour represent that man does not live by bread alone (Luke 4.4).

NET WT. 3 LBS. (1361g) /36 INDIVIDUAL 1.3 OZ. COOKIES
 The Jesus Cookie.com

I call the Jesus Cookie --- junk food Christianity. It contains mostly sugar . . . red, yellow, white, green sugared empty calories. In contrast to the Jesus Bread that gives life the sugary Jesus Cookie is a body killer. In spiritual contrast to Jesus' call to a 'Mediterranean' kind of relationship with him (which means commitment, loyalty, and solidarity with him no matter what), the Jesus Cookie suggests that a life giving relationship with Jesus is simply a matter of getting one's fill of "right Biblical beliefs." Cookie faith limits a personal relationship with Jesus to opinions, values, principles, and "lofty thoughts" while Jesus as the Bread of Life faith means action for God's sake. William Willimon noted: "The spiritual is incarnational, tied to the stuff of this life, present, here, now . . . Bishop Desmond Tutu said: *I don't preach a social gospel; I preach the Gospel, period. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned for the whole person. When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, "Now is that political or social?" He said, "I feed you." Because the good news to a hungry person is bread.*

The Jesus Cookie also proudly announces that their 3 pounds of junk food faith comes in 36 individually wrapped cookies. On its own, Christian doctrinal faith is deadly to the life giving spirit of Jesus.

But just as deadly is the notion that knowing Jesus and being like Jesus is a private affair. Not so. Christian spirituality of the Trinitarian kind is always interpersonal and communal. *The question of bread for myself*, wrote Nikolai Bordyaev, *is a material question, but the question of bread for my neighbor is a spiritual question.* Like a mother hen, God fed manna to her wandering starving children in the desert. The daily "whatchyacallit?" bread formed them into a community of faith who practiced Yahweh's way of justly providing food and spiritual nourishment for all people. Years later when someone in the crowd asked, What must we do to do the works God requires? Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the One God has sent." Christians believe that the One God sent was Jesus. Jesus is God's manna. P Burgess wrote: "*Jesus (like a new Moses) offers liberation from every force of evil and oppression, and . . . initiates a new order in which enduring, flourishing communion between human and human, between humans and God, and between humans and the rest of creation becomes a real, even if elusive, possibility*" (Sermon Seeds, July 27). After hearing this someone in the crowd asked of Jesus, Sir, from now on give US (not me) this bread.

In a nutshell, *Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread*, commented D.T. Miller (UCC Sermon Seeds, 7-28-09). So Jesus answered them: I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. Whenever we gather at the Lord's table with a deep hunger for communion and in need of nourishment for serving the Lord....we say, Jesus, from now on give us this bread of life. We ask for food that nourishes both body and soul. We pray for help to remember what Jesus said, like: Why do you try to take the speck out of your brother's eye when you cannot see the log that is in your own? What did you say about loving our enemies and doing good to those who hate us? Feed us the bread of forgiveness for God's sake and the world's. Amen.