

**Promise of Abundance**  
**Wednesday in Lent – Isaiah 55: 1-11**

**Slide: food**

For one month now, since the ashes were imposed upon our foreheads, we have been committed to this Lenten journey, of self-examining our lives through the contemplation of repentance. These 40 days of the more subdued, inward journey for us can get to feeling pretty weighty, and although the promise of spring and Easter is indeed coming, winter is still here and so is Lent. By now more than midway through, it can be a bit burdensome.

So, when we have this wonderful invitation to the fullness of life that God longs to offer us, it is a welcome break: “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Personally, I take this banquet image very seriously. In fact, the promise of a banquet like this one is one that I do look forward to. As you all may know, I live with food intolerances. I cannot eat gluten, cow dairy, and I’m sometimes sensitive to soy, although I can eat soy a little bit. And, because of that, I often have to think wherever I am, “will they have something I can eat there?” “Will I need to bring my own food to this?” “Should I prepare ahead and bring something with me even though they SAY I should be able to be fed?”

Even with Holy Communion, just yesterday, I went to a worship service where I was invited to come to the table, but I couldn’t because they did not have gluten free bread. I may have been the only one who awkwardly sat there in my pew while everyone else went forward to receive Christ. It was strange that the banquet for which I was invited was one I could not attend.

So, let me tell you, being a pastor at St. John’s is a little bit like the foretaste of God’s banquet that is spoken of here in Isaiah. Here, Gary goes out of his way to make a feast for all no matter your restrictions. Here,

communion is always inviting those who cannot eat bread. And yet, I long to be at a table where all my dietary restrictions fall away and take with them any concerns I have for eating anything. I long for the table God invites me to, a true freedom where the deep thirst for God is satisfied and hunger is satiated with God's steadfast love. Perhaps you do, too.

In this reading from Isaiah, we get what I call a fast from Lent. Call it a Lenten fast but not from food. Here we get a table without limits, a God filled with mercy and pardon for all who come seeking. What a great remedy for the winter blahs and for the long days of Lent as we look into the Easter promises of salvation.

Just now, I want to linger at such a banquet of promise, where all may rest, drink, eat and enjoy of the gifts God gives. The wilderness of human life is often exhausting when we forget that God is with us, and invariably, we do forget. We forget the abundance of God and it is so easy to miss the daily grace that God would give us. So, this week, I'm especially grateful for this reminder...

...that the invitation is always there, the table is always set in God's Kingdom, and the holy abundant mercies of Christ have a chair, a plate, and a place holder with your name on it. Perhaps, just for a moment, before we return to the fast of Lent, we pause briefly to take in the abundance that God so longs to give us.

Thanks be to God.