

This last week it was suggested that we go back to wearing masks inside. This is especially true if you are elderly or immunocompromised. This did not sit well with many people in our country. I have the tendency to go with the flow and not get too worked up about our being told to wear masks. That is not the case for everyone. Some people become unglued with the message we get of when to wear masks and when it is safe not to. It occurs to me that this type of behavior isn't just about masks.

Often people have some rather definite expectations. We see that very clearly in our Bible readings for today. Our Old Testament lesson is about the journey the Israelites were on from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. The reading for today comes right after they had crossed the Red Sea ... and after God had delivered them from the Egyptian army. The people started complaining. They say things like, “If we only stayed in Egypt! At least there we had food to eat!” The people were angry at Moses and his brother Aaron for bringing them into the wilderness. We then read how God provided for the people by sending them quail at twilight and manna in the morning. God was loving and providing for his people.

Last week our gospel covered the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus took a little boy's lunch which was 5 barley loaves and 2 fish. Jesus took that boy's lunch ... gave thanks for it ... and it was distributed to the people. And the Bible tells us that people got as much as they wanted. And when they gathered the leftovers ... they filled 12 baskets! The people were thrilled! Everyone loves a free lunch! So, the people want to make Jesus a king. Jesus tells his disciples, “Let's go to the other side of the lake.”

Today we continue in John's Gospel. The people followed Jesus to the other side of the Sea of Galilee ... to the village of Capernaum. The people were wanting Jesus to give them another free meal. Jesus said the meal yesterday was to lead them to faith. But the people protested, "But you only fed us once! Moses fed our ancestors in the wilderness for 40 years! If you want to be better than Moses, you need to give us more than one meal!"

Then Jesus turned it from the physical back to the spiritual. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry ... and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

One way to understanding this passage is to consider what Jesus did NOT say.

Jesus did NOT say, "I am the turkey of life." I only have turkey twice a year. It is usually every Thanksgiving and then again at Christmas. I think of those who only come to church a couple of times a year ... usually on Easter and Christmas. The truth is that is not very good spiritual nourishment. Oh, Christmas and Easter are the greatest celebrations we have in our faith as we celebrate Jesus' birth and his resurrection ... but worshipping twice a year is not enough to nourish our spirits. We need to have the basics regularly. That is why Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." We need to take in Jesus on a daily basis.

Jesus did NOT say, "I am the medicine of life." We don't take medicine because it tastes so great. We take it because it sometimes medicine is necessary to save our lives. It can make health possible.

It can be easy to talk to Jesus only when we are sick or in need. Sometimes we come to Jesus as a last-ditch effort. Yes, God is there for us in our difficult times, but Jesus wants more!

Jesus wants to be a part of our lives at other times ... when things are going great ... when we are celebrating ... when we feel so blessed.

Finally, Jesus did NOT say, "I am the cake of life." Cake is a luxury in life. And we really like luxuries, don't we? I think of how insatiable our desires can be.

John D. Rockefeller was one of the wealthiest men in the world. He was once asked, "How much is enough?" Rockefeller's answer was, "Just a little bit more!" So often we think we would be happier if we just had a little more ... a little more money ... a little more house ... a little more wardrobe ... a little more health ... a little more of everything!

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life ... not the turkey of life ... nor the medicine of life ... nor the cake of life ... but I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry ... and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Maybe the greatest truth in life is this: When we have lost everything ... and Jesus is all we have left ... then we will realize that Jesus is all we really need!

AMEN.