

Being Fed – Matthew 6:25-33

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This is the season of being fed, isn't it?

A week ago yesterday, Jacob hosted ten of his friends for Friendsgiving at our house. I think that term, "Friendsgiving," is a great one. It's relatively new in our vernacular. But it serves as a Thanksgiving event for a group of people apart from family that really values each other's company.

So, ten teenage friends gathered to play games and have Thanksgiving dinner last Saturday. They all brought food to contribute to the meal. And it was terrific!

There was turkey, mashed potatoes, sweet potato casserole, green beans, corn bread. Somebody brought a couple bags of chips and liters of soda. Some people brought dessert—homemade mini-apple pies, homemade cream puffs, and a huge apple pie from Costco that went untouched because there was so much other food.

Joey and I were blessed to be there too. We got in on the action and were able to enjoy the feast as well.

Those kids were fed a great meal, but their souls were also fed with the camaraderie that comes when friends are together.

I hope this upcoming Thanksgiving week will present us with an opportunity to realize just how much we are fed. With all the holiday foods that will be present at our dinner tables on Thursday and beyond, it probably won't be hard to realize that our cups runneth over when it comes to having enough food to eat.

This isn't true for all people—and it's certainly not true for even some of our neighbors within miles of where we live. (The Shepherd of Hope Food Pantry does a brisk business this time of year.) But by and large, all of us here will have opportunities aplenty to sit and eat and eat and eat this week.

Beyond the dinner table, I hope we also realize how much we are fed in other ways. I hope we can realize that any insecurity we

face about our future challenges—either individually or collectively as a society—are dwarfed by how much we are being fed by a God who is always the one doing the feeding.

We all become fearful at times, fearful over what might happen. We are fearful that we'll have enough money to live on, fearful that our kids or grandkids will be able to live prosperous lives, fearful of the threats that our kids or grandkids face every day at school or in the workplace, fearful that the world is one day going to blow up, we're fearful that God's church around the world is dying, fearful that our health is going to break down and we're going to be all alone.

Do you think the disciples were fearful? Sure. When we pick up this story in Matthew 22, we find the disciples just having left everything they knew as familiar and secure to become travelling preachers and teachers like Jesus. They've left their homes, their jobs, and maybe even their families.

They were fearful. Can't blame them. Jesus had work to do to reassure them of how God would take care of them.

"Look at the birds of the air," he says. "They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

As God took care of the birds, God would take care of the disciples. As God fed them, so would God feed the disciples with what they needed to not only survive but to be successful.

God would be the one to feed them with the assurance they needed.

God feeds us too with a similar assurance that blessing will always trump the threats we face—the fear we have for our security, success, or safety.

Following worship today, you will be asked to vote on the slate of new church officers listed in your bulletin. The Nominating Committee began its work in early October, as we usually do. And when we get started that early every year, I think all of us believe we

have plenty of time to get the slate complete before this, the 3rd, Sunday in November.

Frankly, though, we needed just about every day of this 6-week stretch for the nominees to become known to all of you. We selected our candidates carefully and prayerfully. And one of them, when asked, realized that now was not the right time to serve.

As we get close to this Sunday every year, there's always a bit of fear that we will have our slate in place in time. We (or I) become fearful and anxious that we aren't in tune with the right candidates and that we aren't going to be finished by today.

But as it always happens, God fed us. God fed us with the right people at the right time to serve as ruling elders for the next three years and as next year's Nominating Committee. It's an outstanding class, and it's the right class for the challenges we face.

There was no need for us to fear. God indeed did provide in abundance.

When we fear we won't be fed—either physically, emotionally, or spiritually—we get impatient, and we act in ways that sometimes defy logic. We exhibit behaviors designed to take the feeding out of God's hands. Symbolically, we attempt to feed ourselves; and when we do, we often find ourselves wasting a lot of energy.

Many of you have dogs at home, and you might be able to relate to this story. It's told by Kari Myers, written in *Home Touch* magazine.

“My little dog has an eccentric habit. It's more of a compulsion really. Whenever we give him a rawhide bone, he spends the rest of the day and sometimes the next in a flurry of activity. Whether he is motivated by instinct or his own peculiar quirkiness or some combination of the two is hard to say.

“Given a bone, he commences a search through the house for a suitable place to bury it. Once he settles on a spot, he proceeds to ‘dig’ a hole in the linoleum. Undaunted by the fact that all his furious digging scarcely leaves a scuff on the floor, he carefully places his bone in his imaginary hole. Next, he painstakingly noses imaginary

dirt over it and then turns himself around to kick some more for good measure. This whole exercise in futility can take a quarter of an hour.

“It is at this point, when he inspects his work, that he appears to realize something is amiss. His prize is not sufficiently buried and, in fact, is in plain sight. So, he picks it back up and hunts for a better spot. And thus, the cycle repeats over and over again until it’s time for a nap.

“Sometimes,” Kari Myers writes, “as I watch him and shake my head, I wonder if there is some of this craziness in me, too. Are there things I do over and over out of a compulsion I do not understand — things that are equally unproductive? Maybe you know what I mean. Things like wearing ourselves out trying to impress other people. Or how about chasing after things that never satisfy. Or maybe it’s just a cycle of busyness that doesn’t really get us anywhere. Sometimes I wonder...but then it’s time for a nap.”

What her dog did, and what we often do similarly reflects our desire to feed ourselves when we don’t sense that God is doing any of the feeding. We take matters into our own hands in ways that only prove futile in our quest to find what truly nourishes us.

During this week and season of Thanksgiving, it is good for us to remember that we are fed not only by the hands of those who prepare us our Thanksgiving dinner, but by the hand of God who feeds our souls and our spirits with the assurance that we are in good hands.

I came across a C.S Lewis quote this week that resonated. Lewis said, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen; not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

Our faith—our unique faith in the God who is Jesus—allows us to see so much. It allows us to see how it is that God provides for us, how God feeds us when we can’t feed ourselves in troubled times. If we live in a very messy world, which we do, it would do us well to

have a set of beliefs that will be robust enough and complex enough to bear the weight of this messy world.

Those beliefs reinforce that we need not fear; we need not be anxious; we need not waste our energy in matters that would attempt to accomplish what only God can do. This is what our faith does. It shifts the burden from self-reliance to that of God-reliance.

When we trust Jesus to say, "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," the burden becomes lighter. God, not our inadequate tending, will do the feeding.

"Don't worry," Jesus said to the disciples. He would feed them, and he will feed us.