

Sermon *Becoming Bread for the World*  
The Rev. David J. Marshall, All Angels 8.4.24

When you see the restaurant Olive Garden, what do you think of? I think of the breadsticks; the all-you-can-eat breadsticks and salad. I don't really remember the entrée but the bread, yeah, that's the good stuff. They put a lite amount of garlic bits on top of each bread stick and then sprinkle parmesan cheese over then entire basket. Yummy.

One of my favorite restaurants of all time is the Old Spaghetti Factory. They bring you a loaf of freshly baked sourdough bread wrapped in a white server's towel because it's too hot to hold. They give you a serrated knife to cut it with and two cups of butter. When I slice into the loaf a small cloud of sourdough steam comes out and the butter melts immediately. My son Ethan, it's his favorite restaurant too. He'd eat part of the sourdough loaf before the entrée, get a second loaf during the meal, and use it to literally clean his plate (we'd joke with the server that they could put his plate back on the shelf because he cleaned it so well with the slices of bread).

Here's my last bread story – it's for those who cannot eat gluten. Christi and I make some of the best Mexican food east of San Diego, at least according to our kids. We marinate pollo asado, grill it on high heat, and chop it up for tacos. I make my Marshall Pico de Gallo, Christi makes her salsa, and we make made-from-scratch Mexican rice too which is almost a meal all by itself. But the whole meal starts with the corn tortilla. In our opinion, you must make your own tortillas to make it authentic. I mix up the masa; I use a tortilla flat maker; and Christi bakes them on a hot ungreased pan until they look like tanned skin with some dark freckles (that's how we were taught to know when the tortilla is ready). We put them in a tortilla warmer and get the rest of the food ready. When it's time, the red lid of the warmer is lifted, and the corn tortilla steam rolls out and we get ready for a feast.

If you are wondering why I am talking about bread and corn tortillas it is because of the phrase Jesus used which is this: *I am the bread of life*. We're going to hear Jesus use that phrase for the next four weeks, so I wanted to start out with describing my favorite bread. Whether it's my favorite Italian restaurant or Mexican food, or my favorite Greek/Mediterranean restaurant, or this great Indonesian restaurant in San Diego that makes amazing naan, it all starts with the bread. This is an analogy for life – Jesus is the Bread of Life. He is what makes life worth living (or tasty, following the analogy, the way that bread or corn tortillas make the meal). But what does the phrase, I am the bread of life, mean to us today?

I have been involved in three different Episcopal Camps and conference centers in Washington, Idaho and California. Camp Cross, in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, is a beautiful rustic camp on Lake Coeur d'Alene which is a deep mountain lake that hardly ever freezes – because it's so deep – and the water never really gets above 62 degrees during the summer. Camp Cross is accessible by boat only during the summer and is the smallest camp that I have been involved with. The location and size make it genuine and precious compared to the corporate, year-round camps and conference centers in Washington and California. The chaplain for each session at Camp Cross is involved closely as a staff member in the planning and preparation. Once I became a priest, I was a part of the season that had this as the theme: *Becoming Bread for the World*. The idea of the theme is that, metaphorically speaking, camp is made from ingredients from all over the area

(campers), we follow a recipe (the hourly schedule), and we grow into something that never existed before. Then, becoming bread, we are then broken and sent back out into the world where we came from. But, we are different when we return because we have become bread. This theme was completed in each closing Eucharist for each session. We baked our own communion bread, blessed it, broke it, shared it and then left to go home. In fact, every Episcopal camp I have been involved in, we always end with the Eucharist, the breaking of the bread, and then the sending out into the world. Like Jesus holding up the bread, blessing it and breaking it saying: This is my body, broken for you, continue to bless and break this bread until I return. And that's what we have done, are doing, and will do until he returns.

David French, a self-identified Evangelical Christian, is a writer who used to write for the National Review and is now writing for the NY Times. This past week he wrote an article that the Christian Church in America is having a very public family argument. One side of the argument, which he calls Orthodoxy, says that we become bread for the world by what we profess, by what we say, by what we believe and then tell others – correcting others – to follow what we profess. The other side, which he calls the Orthopraxy, says we become bread for the world by practicing, or exhibiting, their faith by what they do. The Orthodoxy is concerned with saying or professing the right thing (and concerned with those who do not say those things) and the Orthopraxy which is concerned with doing the right thing (which is helping others in need and trying to love our neighbor as ourselves). French's article leaves out the fact that this argument has been going on for a long time.

In the Letter to the Ephesians, the author (probably) Paul is experiencing the same family argument of the Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy. Paul, I believe, is lifting up the practice of faith over the right words of faith as a model to live and win the hearts of others who have no faith. He writes this: *speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ*. It sounds like Paul is saying it's important “to speak the truth in love” – which seems, at times, to be the mantra of the Orthodoxy. The more I have read this passage in Greek, the more I am convinced “to speak” is not an appropriate rendering of the Greek word Paul wrote.

Some of you may be familiar with someone saying to you, “I'm going to speak the truth to you in love...” and then you hear a strong, condemning opinion that does feel like it's rooted in love but in judgement. Some in the Christian family think that Paul's phrase – *to speak the truth in love* – is a license to be self-righteous and tell others what to do (or hold them to a standard that not even they themselves could attain). I'd like to clear up the translation of “to speak” and how we Orthopraxy love to one another.

The Letter to the Ephesians was written in Greek. It is the job of the pastors, priests, theologians and representatives of the Church, to translate the Greek phrases into English (or whichever language we are speaking in). For as nice as it would be to have the requirement to learn Greek in order to become Christian, that is not our Orthopraxy (or Orthodoxy either). Instead, we get to translate it. So, here we go.

To-speak-the-truth, as translated in English, is one Greek word. Aletheuo – the one word in Greek – cannot be easily translated into English. The root of the word is “truth” but it acts as a verb that would be something like this: *truth-exhibit*. By *exhibiting-the-truth* in agape (love) we must grow (like when bread rises) into every way into Christ. I dove into the Hebrew equivalent of the word, aletheuo. (I am using the Hebrew equivalent because Paul, being Jewish, would have known the Hebrew root of the Greek word and, since the New Testament had not yet been written, the Hebrew Scriptures were the only “Bible” that he and his followers had. It helps in translation to get behind the Greek word into the world in which Paul was living, which, was certainly Jewish with the Hebrew Scriptures) One reference in Hebrew to the word aletheuo (truth-exhibit) is in Genesis and another is in 1 Kings.

Truth on exhibit was show when Joseph – the brother with the amazing technicolor dream coat whose brothers sold him into slavery and he then became the second in command of the most powerful country in the region (Egypt) – spoke to his brothers for the first time in decades. Joseph looked Egyptian, he spoke the language and needed a translator from Egyptian into Hebrew so he could communicate with this family members. When he started speaking, they didn’t, or couldn’t, believe him. But then, he broke down, sent the translator away, and spoke in rudimentary Hebrew. Then, with that truth-exhibit, they believed him and it was a magnificent family reunion. It can be reasoned that they felt his genuineness, his authenticity, not so much in what he said but in how he expressed the truth in love.

The other reference is from the great prophet Elijah who was sent by God to a widow and her son who had just enough flour and oil to make one or two loaves of bread. Elijah told her to use all her flour (there was a famine going on) and that God will provide. She did and in the morning, she had just as much flour in her jar as she had the day before. This happened for a couple of days. Then she said words to the effect of: I now believe you because of the truth-exhibit in that I have more flour.

Both of these stories have to do with famine and bread. Joseph’s brothers were in Egypt to get grain because of the famine. They wanted, needed, to make bread. The truth-exhibit was then shown in their desire for bread. Likewise, the Elijah and widow story also involve a truth-exhibit, and faith, and bread.

Jesus said, I am the bread of the world. We, in faith, show, or exhibit that truth through what we do, through our orthopraxy. But how do we exhibit truth in our lives?

In the first part of our reading from Ephesians today, Paul writes the following: we should conduct ourselves with all humility with all gentleness and with all patience. In other words, we need to orthopraxy Jesus. He, the Bread of Life, exhibited humility, gentleness and patience. We too need to become that bread for the world by also living into, exhibiting, humility, gentleness and patience.

Last week I told you about the Steve Test – a guy, “Steve”, who was a contrarian; he would doubt everything until it was proven – and how important having the Steve Test is to me to challenge various things we think are orthodoxy. It was Steve’s practice, orthopraxy, to do it and it taught me well. Today, I’d like to tell you about another Steve (but his name really is Steve). When I think of humility, gentleness and patience, I often think of him.

Steve was the senior warden of the church where I first served as Rector. He helped me greatly, both in our friendship and in his leadership. We went through some difficult times as we were putting the church back together again after a split from the previous Rector. With all that we went through, I never heard Steve swear. Never. He continually found ways to be patient, to wait for a moment before saying anything. He acted with gentleness and self-control. Steve also was in charge of a good-sized business operation. I believe he also acted that way with his managers and staff. Speaking of patience, Steve is also a San Diego (now LA) Chargers fan (patience because they have never won a Super Bowl) and season ticket holder.

Steve invited me to a Monday Night Football Game – it’s the only game a pastor can realistically attend. We went to a nearby bar before the game. The server came over with two glasses of water and then spilled the entire contents of one glass into his lap. He, as usual, remained calm; the server was freaking out. He then used her name, she looked directly at him; they exchanged a brief look, she apologized, and quickly brought more towels. When she left, I said, “You know her?” He said, “Yeah, I fired her six months ago. I was looking at her to see if she knew it was me.” (And therefore intentionally spilled the ice water on his shirt and lap). As usual, he was gentle, patient and humble. Later she came over and he asked genuinely how she was doing. She said she’s doing well and she thought being fired was horrible at the time but it turns out that it was exactly what she needed. Steve is the orthopraxy of faith. He doesn’t preach, he exhibits the truth of the Gospel. He is becoming/has become bread for the world.

For this Sunday, as we ponder the bread of life, I am wondering if you see ways to truth-exhibit the love of Christ to others. Is there a way to be gentler, humbler and more patient in life. If so, then we become bread of life for the world. David French asserts that the world, and in particular, our country, really needs that Bread of Life, the orthopraxy (not orthodoxy) to show the love of neighbor and of God. Jesus has set the highest bar of humility, gentleness and patience. But, as he broke the bread and shared it with the world, so can we also follow his example of how to live to feed the world. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.