**Waybread**

**By Rev. Sheryl Stewart**

1 Kings 19: 4-8 Ephesians 4:25-5:2 John 6: 35, 41-51

Psalm 34: 1-8

**Summary: Christ lives: either seen or obscured in our lives.**

 I have always loved fantasy, fables, parables, fairy tales, science fiction, and fantastic tall tales in literature. Quite a few such stories, from Sinbad to Lord of the Rings, to Popeye the sailor, seem inspired by the Bible’s accounts of miraculously empowering food. Manna in the wilderness, giving strength to follow the cloud by day and the fire by night is just one example. Headed to the same holy mountain, Elijah is twice given a cake made fresh in heaven which gives him enough stamina to travel 40 days. We are also on a journey to God, but our waybread is finer than manna and better than Elijah’s supper. Our waybread also comes from heaven and is nothing less than Holy Communion, the very body and life blood of God’s Son.

It is evident in John’s Gospel that Jesus is aware that He is the waybread that God sent to give His people the strength to travel through life to Him. The consequences of eating this waybread are intended to be seen – not during the Apocalypse at the end of time – but right now as this food changes our lives.

We hear talk and speculation about the second coming of Christ. Some look to see if Jesus will be born again and others expect to see Him physically descend to earth out of a cloud. However, I want to remind you that the church is called “the body of Christ” for a reason. Jesus is either seen or obscured by the way His followers live. If we are true to Jesus, we may, collectively, be His second coming ourselves!

Don’t we sing, “I ask you how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!”? How will anyone else know He lives unless they see evidence that what we sing is true? Pastor Jim led us in Communion just last week. We dared to make His body and blood part of us. Where have we traveled on the strength of that waybread? Has it been evident to anyone other than ourselves that He is our strength?

Since we are God’s dear children, we journey through life to God to be like God, just as Jesus already is. Lying stops, exploitation stops, fear, mockery and scorn of others stops. Bitterness, insulting, and shouting all give way to kindness, forgiveness, and vulnerability. Yes, I meant to say, “vulnerability.” Jesus is God’s offering to us. We take advantage of that, take advantage of Him. Why are we so reluctant to be taken advantage of, if we are to be like Him?

Are you afraid, as I am, that there won’t be enough of you to go around? This, after the manna and the quails in the wilderness, the flour pot of the widow of Nun, the tiny pot of Hanukkah oil that lit a flame for 7 days, the feeding of thousands on five barley rolls and two fish. Yes, there will be enough of you to change the world. God will make it so!

Jesus is God’s offering to us, we are God’s offering to Jesus, and both Jesus and His church are God’s offering to the world. Therefore, we invite friends, strangers, comfortable people, uncomfortable people, and outright enemies to worship with us. On our own strength, we cannot travel though this week, let alone this month or this lifetime to meet God.

Luckily, God has met us and given us waybread. So, when we finally stand before God’s presence at the holy mountain, we will stand there **as** God’s presence. We shall be what we so longed to see: Christ coming again, in us, with us, forever! I think Pastor Jim’s usual ending is right for this. Let’s say it together:

“Hallelujah and amen!”