

Thanksgiving Eve
November 21, 2007
“Jesus is the Bread of Life”
John 6:25-35
Pr. Tom Schoenherr

My life has changed dramatically in the past few days. I am now married to Kayla Michele Schoenherr’s grandmother.

We have been given a gift from God in this little 3 pound girl who is 15 inches long, born on Sunday afternoon, and who, for now, spends her time at Children’s Hospital on Kingshighway. Her mother, Lisa, and her father, Neil, along with her grandparents, aunts and uncle are very thankful to God that she is here, and that everything seems to be working so well. Neil and Lisa have been able to hold her and bond with her, so that as she rests on them they can hear and feel one another’s heartbeats.

It will be a while until Kayla will be able to go home. We will have to wait for that. We live in a society that wants to have our way right away; instant gratification. We find it difficult to wait for computers to give us the answers we want; for us to wait until we can talk to people by phone; and we don’t want to wait in lines in traffic or in stores. And it will be hard for us to wait until Kayla will be out of the hospital. We want it to be right now.

God was the giver of the perishable manna bread that the children of Israel ate in the wilderness, and now the people whom Jesus is talking to in our text, want to control Jesus so that he gives them bread too. “Give us this bread always,” they demand. They don’t understand Jesus is talking about himself. They want bread right now. A child demands of his parents, “I want to watch Sesame Street and I want to watch it now!” His parents may say, “O Lord, give us patience and we want it right now. In the end we want to be in control and we don’t trust God to provide for us in God’s own time and way.

On Sunday morning before the 8:00 service, Kayla’s grandmother called me to tell me that the doctor was still trying to prevent Lisa from delivering the baby, hoping she would stay inside Lisa for a while longer. Before the 11:00 service, she called again to say that it looked like the baby was going to come anyway. I left shortly after the 11:00 service was over to get to the hospital, and I was able to have a prayer with Neil and Lisa before Kayla was born.

Kayla’s desire to be born is certainly a sign of her persistence, which will make a difference in the days and weeks ahead. Kayla is determined.

Jesus is our Bread of Life who is even more persistent in his love for us. In spite of all of our efforts at holding Jesus back; our resistance to trust God, and our wanting to be in control of our own lives; our desire for the bread that perishes; Jesus perishes in our place. In Jesus’ death and resurrection for us, Jesus replaces the bread that perishes with the bread that gives life now and forever.

Jesus is the Bread of Life who hungers and thirsts for us. Jesus Christ is the center of our lives and the reason for our Thanksgiving feasts tomorrow. Jesus Christ is the center of the thanksgiving feast of the Lord's Supper that happens here each week. Believing in Jesus means that we now have a new identity as followers of Christ, because of the One who has identified with us and walks with us in life's journey.

There are many people in our world who have no bread to eat and not enough water to drink. We give thanks for the opportunities that God gives us to share our food and water with people who are desperately hungry. We were able to deliver 125 meals to hungry people this past weekend. Our own feasts of Thanksgiving can also remind us of those in need, and the call to share perishable bread with people because we have received the imperishable Bread of Life in Jesus Christ.

We give thanks for the freedom we have, and we pray for that time when there will be no more war or needless loss of life; when hunger and poverty will be no more, and all the world will give thanks and praise to God.

Each day we are with Kayla, this 3 pound miracle of life, we are reminded of what a precious gift she is to us. She has a long way to go to get stronger, but Neil and Lisa and all of us cannot help but give thanks and praise to God for her life.

Jesus, the Bread of Life, is the reason for us to give thanks and praise for our lives, for the people who sit at our thanksgiving tables, and for those who used to be there but are now part of the communion of saints. We give thanks for family and friends, but especially we give thanks for the gift of Jesus Christ who loves us beyond our understanding. Jesus Christ is the Bread whose heart beats for us, and who gives life to the whole world. O Lord, give us this bread always. Amen.