

Many of you at some point in time have probably played the board game called “The Game of Life.” As I now look back in time and remember playing that game as a kid, I realize it was not about life as life is truly experienced. It was about an ideal, about life as we were told life **ought** to be. You probably remember that as the game was played each participant had choices to make along the way: go to college or not, to get married or not, and to have a career that paid a lot of money. In fact, the highest salary earned, the **bread** winner who made the most money, was what each player tried to achieve. Of course, there were pitfalls along the way and there were also shortcuts to the finish line, with the finish line being retirement. The goal of the game was not necessarily to finish first but to finish with the most money. Quite frankly, this was a subliminal way to teach kids about a purpose in life – winning and becoming the wealthiest **bread** winner. However, at the end of the game, all that paper money just disappeared until the next time the game was played and the pursuit of money began again in all earnestness.

As I think back to playing that game, I now find it interesting that “The Game of Life” did not include death as a part of life. I am sure our culture’s denial of death made this a reality in the formation of the game. And yet,

the end in the **real** game of life for each one of us will always be a tied game between players. In fact, nobody ever wins in this real game of life because we all finish with the same end as everyone loses everything in death. And, when we finally realize that, we begin to find out that any purpose in life that focuses on accumulating a large stack of money turns out to be an illusion.

The truth of the matter is that, in the grand scheme of things and this very **real** game of life each one of us lives, our attempts to make a big splash in the world and our vociferous need and hunger to be **bread** winners and build up our pile of possessions is nothing more than a desire to deny our mortality. For most of us, we feel that if we leave something of our pile of goods behind for our loved ones, then we leave something of ourselves behind. It gives us a chance to endure beyond death. And, quite frankly, the stark reality is that none of the money and stuff we attain will ever satisfy our lives or fill our hungry hearts.

Well, into this context in which we posture, play and perform while striving to be successful bread winners, Jesus has a message for us. Jesus says to us, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God has set his seal.....**I am** the bread of life. Whoever comes to

me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” Jesus invites us to live into an alternative way of being, an alternative way of living, and an alternative way of playing this very real game of life. And Jesus offers us the **bread** that truly satisfies our beings. Jesus offers us **himself**, the very life of God’s son, life that **truly** matters right here and right now and for all eternity.

Our hunger for money and possessions, a hunger that seems to drive our way of living, will never bring satisfaction and joy. Only Jesus will satisfy the hungry heart. And, as Jesus feeds us with himself – the bread of life that truly matters – Jesus reshapes us. As we are fed by Jesus himself he changes us, changing our purpose for existence and enabling us to live for others. And, the great paradox is that Jesus satisfies within us the deep hunger for purpose and meaning, something that moves us beyond ourselves, while at the same time awakening in us other hungers. Jesus awakens a hunger for peace, justice, loving kindness, and a humble walk with our God. These then are the hungers that never leave us and these are the hungers that truly matter in life. That is why the offering at worship is gathered as part of the celebration of the meal. We are offering ourselves into the service of the one who gives himself as food for us. We are allowing our lives to be reshaped by Christ into his own body for the

world. We become bread like his bread, to feed and work for healing in a very broken world. And all of this happens not by getting something, but by **giving** everything as Christ has given to us. Every time we gather together we come hungry for life, and **leave** hungry to **give** life, full of Jesus, the bread of life. Every time we gather together we are fed and nourished by the very life of Jesus and we are then enabled to **live** out God's grace and love as we go about our days in the communities where we work, serve and play.

Now, I must say this way of life and being is not always easy. When we live life as members of the body of Christ, we take the way of the Cross. And, that way means that the pain of the hungry person, the pain of the world, is also the pain of Christ and therefore it becomes **our** pain. The way of the cross means a dying to self. But, we are fed by the one who not only went to the cross, but went through the cross to resurrection, bringing life and love to this very broken world. And, when we live as broken members of the body of Christ, the love of God **empowers** us to feed the hungry, care for the sick, and work for justice in this hurting world. That is what living into the abundance of God is all about.

Jesus **is** the bread of life. So, tonight as we celebrate Thanksgiving, we give thanks not only for all the blessings we have received, but especially for the **bread of life** that truly matters – **Jesus, the Christ**.