Sermon for Mid-Week Lenten Service, Week 4

# The Text: Exodus 16:14,15

# Shadows of the Savior—The Bread from Heaven

“You are what you eat.” We hear that increasingly these days. So they tell us to be careful about what we eat, and that brings us to our Shadow of the Saviour for tonight. The Old Testament picture that foreshadowed the coming of Christ that we have before us is one that speaks of food; in fact, of the most universal food of all. May the Spirit guide us now as we study:

**Shadows of the Saviour—The Bread from Heaven**

**I. The best bread**

About a month had passed since God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt’s slavery and their food supply began to run out. What supplies they had carried out of Egypt had been consumed, and what cattle they hadn’t consumed were getting scrawny or even dying off from heat and disease. So they began to complain. Who could have blamed the Lord if he had abandoned them and left them to die in their ingratitude. But instead, God fed them miraculously. The next morning, when the Israelites awoke, the ground was covered with small round grains. They put them on their tongues and these grains tasted like wafers made with honey. “Manna?” they asked in Hebrew, “What is it?” And that became the name for the miracle bread that God sent them every morning, except on the Sabbath, for 40 years while they wandered in the desert.

We may not see any shadow of the Saviour in this miracle bread at first glance, but Jesus Himself explains in John 6:51: ***“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.”*** Jesus showed that the manna that his Father sent from heaven was a picture of Himself. Can we see the parallels?

The manna came down from heaven to an Israel that could not feed itself. Christ, the Bread of Life, also left his throne in heaven to feed the souls of people who would have starved without Him. There was no substitute for the manna; the Israelites had to eat it or die. There is no substitute for Christ; He is the Way, and no man comes to the Father but by him. The manna fell for all people—men, women, and children—and all needed it. So all have sinned and need the Bread of Life. The manna supplied the needs of Israel for 40 years, day after day. So also the Bread of Life must be our steady food during the whole journey of life from baptism to our deathbeds. The manna needed to be used. Those who gathered it to store away soon found it full of maggots. So Christ is for using, as He Himself said: ***“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.”*** (John 6:54). A Christ on the shelf does hungry souls no good. He needs to be used- not that He will become mouldy without our use, but that we will become fit for nothing but the garbage can of hell without Him.

The psalmist once urged, ***“Taste and see that the Lord is good”*** (Psalm 34:8). That’s why we are here again today, to feast on Him as He comes from the heavens to feed us through his Word. Lenten time is nourishment time, time to pause and reflect on how richly Christ feeds us, time to reflect on what life would be like without Jesus and how much we need Him.

 **II. The best hunger**

Bread is an important element of a staple diet. But many people today want fast food. They think they are too busy to come in and sit down at the banquet table; they just want to drive through for a quick snack. But feeding our souls takes time. It takes time to come to eat in His house each Sunday, time that could be used elsewhere but not without giving up that vital nourishment that Jesus offers. Conducting home devotions takes time and effort. It’s not easy to find the time to gather the family around the Word and to take the family into the Word, but think of the nourishment we receive.

Here’s another problem. People want to approach Jesus and his Word as if it is a menu. We want to run our fingers down the columns and pick only the items that tickle our tastes. Can you imagine if we let our children eat only what they *liked*, if we skipped the broccoli and only reached for the cheesecake and ice-cream? How detrimental that would be to their physical well-being! Yet this is what our flesh wants to do with God’s Word. We want His commandments, but only those that step on our neighbour’s sins and not our own. Some of us want to hear about the Saviour, but not about serving Him, or about giving a generous share of our treasures, or about the work that needs to be done.

Others want junk food, not bread. They want a church that entertains them, a church that will “keep up with the times,” which really means a church that will let them believe as they please. The bread that such churches offer is so full of air and impurities that it will never satisfy, for it is poisoned, and will only lead to the detriment to their spiritual health.

So how’s your appetite? Bread is made for eating, and we are what we eat. God wants us to know what He has given us in Christ and in His Word. He wants us to appreciate the pure food He offers in His Word.

May we continue to hunger and thirst for the true Bread from heaven, for therein God continues to feed our souls unto eternal life. May we continue to feed on Jesus day after day for spiritual nourishment and strength. Amen.