

The 40 year anniversary of the musical festival Woodstock was a couple of weeks ago. I was only 3 years old at the time so obviously I do not have any memory of this culture defining event. Some of you remember Woodstock very well. Although I am told that there were many folks there who have a hard time recalling anything from that event.

I recently heard someone telling about his experience of Woodstock. He told about how he was able to get a choice seat for the concert toward the front of the mob of people. But the time came when he and the people around him became hungry. The only food available was at a concession stand in the back. So he volunteered to traipse through the mud, remember it was very muddy at Woodstock, to the concession stand to get hot dogs for his group. He said it took him over an hour to get to the stand. He finally got there and ordered a dozen hot dogs.

Rather than order for himself and eat his food right there, he decided it was the moral thing for him to wait in order to eat with the rest of his group. So then, with his 12 hot dogs in hand, he trudged back through the morass of people and found his group. What kept him going was the thought of finally eating his hot dog. His round trip to get these 12 hot dogs was 3 hours.

Upon arriving back to his group, he was mobbed with a flurry of hands grabbing the hot dogs he was carrying. Before he knew what was happening, all 12 dogs were gone. And all he was left with was the empty box and the mud on his legs. All that work and he was still hungry.

In today's Scripture, the disciples are returning to Jesus after having gone out to several communities teaching and working. They are also returning to Jesus after hearing how John the Baptist was killed by Herod through the whim of his daughter. They had been working so hard they had not even had time to eat. So they are exhausted.

Jesus recognizes their exhaustion and responds by not giving them more assignments. He instead invites them to a deserted place where they are to rest for a while. A crowd soon gathers and Jesus feeds this large multitude of people with a little bit of fish and a little bit of bread. Jesus takes care of his disciples physically and spiritually. He provides them rest and he provides them food.

Our culture is suffering a great deal right now because we have become so busy we are not taking the time to prepare and eat quality foods. For many of us, we are eating more and more processed food with unhealthy additives and preservatives. The average morsel of food travels over 1,000 miles before it reaches our table. We don't have time to cook anymore so we are filling ourselves up with foods high in fat and low in nutrition. Salt and Sugar and Fat are becoming a bigger portion of our diet leading to diabetes and obesity.

We are not only suffering physically due to our diet, we are also suffering spiritually. As we pop more and more bags of food in the microwave, we lose connection with where food is coming from. We lose a connection to the Creator. Our creator placed Adam and Eve in a garden, not in the frozen foods section of Wal-Mart or Bi-Lo.

At Session on Monday evening, we began a discussion about community gardening. We began a discussion about how we as a church can become leaders in creating, maintaining, and teaching gardening to others. You see in your bulletin about a task force being formed which will explore different options for community gardening and how we can develop a faith based model of gardening.

I hope you will consider becoming involved and talking to Mike Hopf or myself about how to work together to develop a ministry of community gardening. We also talked about the trail we now have on our property and how we can be a place which teaches and provides opportunities for people to maintain healthy lifestyles. If this continues to develop, then my work on my doctorate will focus on the literal growth of gardening ministry.

Some of you come from families that know all about gardening. You know how to plant, care for, and harvest crops. Some of you know how to can, really prepare food rather than serve what has already been processed elsewhere. You are needed to lead us forward.

In the Scripture which we read, the disciples come to Jesus exhausted from their work of teaching. They were so busy they did not even have time to eat. Jesus then led them to a secluded place to rest and then he gave them the food they needed. Food which he blessed, broke, and gave to them.

Maybe Jesus is leading us to help ourselves and others to take the time to prepare food and eat food that is healthy for us. Maybe there is a sickness in our culture and we are being called by God to become agents of God's healing. Maybe God is beginning to equip us to help restore places where people can rest and receive food that nourishes. Restore food to the way God creates it rather than the way human beings manipulate it into a something destructive.

Today in front of you is a table. At this table is reminder of what Jesus provides for us. We are provided the physical and the spiritual food we need. Jesus is waiting to serve us. AMEN.

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-The opening illustration I heard in the car from NPR while traveling on the road.

-Text: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

-Given: August 23, 2009 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)