

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Bread of Life,  
Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Oreo, the best-selling cookie of the 20th century, was developed and introduced by Nabisco, in 1912. The U.S. leads the world as the biggest cookie bakers and eaters, spending more than \$550 million annually on Oreos alone. The truth about Oreos is they have no real nutritional value. These facts about Oreos remind me that many people are hungry to have peace with God. Yet so many things we try have no nutritional value and we are left empty.

I can think of several examples where people eat, but are not satisfied. PJ and I like to watch both of the TV shows featuring Zombies; The Walking Dead and Fear the Walking Dead. In both of these popular shows, when someone dies, they come back as the Walking Dead who have incredible and insatiable hunger. They eat any and all flesh, but never get their fill. Kind of like me at Thanksgiving dinner... Then there's the plight of the crew of the Black Pearl in the movie Pirates of the Caribbean. No matter how much they ate, they could not be satisfied. They cannot taste. They cannot enjoy. They cannot be filled. The bread turns to ashes in their mouths. This is the plight of the world. So many people eat, but will not be satisfied. They seek happiness, but will not find it. Father of the Church, Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Jesus." We love

what tastes good, but like those who eat Oreos, people often forfeit what we really need for healthy bodies and minds just for what tastes good now.

It's estimated more than 20 million people in the United States need professional treatment for drug or alcohol abuse. U.S. citizens spend over 50 billion dollars each year on illegal narcotics to dull their pain or for momentary happiness. People are searching for happiness, fulfillment, relief from pain. We are hungry souls. We are a hungry nation, but often for the wrong things. We need the Bread of life. When Jesus told His followers He was the bread of life, He was giving them and us a solution—not just for our physical hunger, but also for our emotional, mental, and especially our spiritual hunger.

In the opening words of John chapter 6 Jesus has just fed 5,000 people with 5 loaves of bread and two small fish. When Jesus and his disciples reached the other side of the lake, those who were part of the 5,000 recently fed were waiting for him. Jesus said: “You are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.” Jesus accuses the crowd of ignoring the message of His miraculous signs and only following Him for the “free meal.” In other words, they were so enthralled with the food, they were missing out on the fact that their Messiah had come.

Our Messiah has come! His name is Jesus Christ, The Bread of Life! Salvation is God's miracle. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, it was God Himself resting in the arms of Mary. How did Martin Luther put it:

“O Lord, though you created all,  
How weak you are, so poor and small,  
That you should choose to lay your head  
Where lowly cattle lately fed!”  
“Instead of soft and siken stuff  
You have but hay and straw so rough  
A cradle for the Lord of all.

The Gospel of John was written to tell us the miracles Jesus did, speak the truth of His identity. His perfect sinless life quenches a thirsty guilty soul seeking peace with the Creator. That is why the Apostle Paul can write: “We have been justified through faith in Jesus, and now we have peace with God.” Isn't peace with God what the human soul is seeking? It's what I'm always seeking and what I'm most Thankful for!

When Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the dead body of Jesus down from the cross, they placed his body in the tomb. It was sealed and guarded by soldiers. Three days later Jesus was raised from death with a glorified resurrected body. That is why Jesus can say: “I am the bread that came down from heaven. I tell you the truth, he who believes (in me) has everlasting life. I am the bread of life.”

So, this Thanksgiving I remember all the things I'm especially thankful for. The love of my wife and my family. The calling God has placed on my heart to

serve Him, here at Trinity alongside all of you. I'm thankful for the freedom to worship God both here in this Church building and at home or anyplace where I see God working. I'm thankful for the health I have and the mind God has given me to do this work that God provides for me. I guess if I have to name one thing that I'm most grateful for, it would have to be that God has made me aware of his presence and of his divine goodness. God has opened my eyes to see Him and to trust in his promises. Without that faith, none of the other blessings would matter at all. They would all turn to ash in my mouth. This isn't so with God. Once I became aware of God's presence even the bad things don't overwhelm me any more. The bad things still come, but they pale by comparison to the love I know Jesus Christ has for me.

Having said all that, I still struggle with being grateful. I know I should always be thankful, to rejoice always as it says in our second lesson, but there are days when I think to myself, "self, why are you so down in the dumps today." I can't really give an answer, but I still struggle... On those days gratitude comes hard. The good news is, even on those days God never leaves us nor abandons us. Even on those days when you forget to be thankful and act like selfish children, God still loves us.

Sometimes I forget that all this... All I have is not really mine, but a gift, on loan from the one who created the universe and as far as I know never turned over

the deed to any human. O' I might share some of what I have, but I know it's not all God asks for. Even the stuff I do give back to God isn't always the best of what I have and I do it begrudgingly. When I find myself thinking along those lines, I remember a poem I heard by Vivian Cox. It's called the Cookie Thief and it goes something like this:

A woman was waiting at an airport one night,  
With several long hours before her flight.  
She hunted for a book in the airport shops,  
Bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop.  
She was engrossed in her book but happened to see,  
That the man sitting beside her, as bold as could be...  
Grabbed a cookie or two from the bag in between,  
Which she tried to ignore to avoid a scene.  
So she munched the cookies and watched the clock,  
As the gutsy cookie thief diminished her stock.  
She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by,  
Thinking, "If I wasn't so nice, I'd blacken his eye."  
With each cookie she took, he took one too,  
When only one was left, she wondered what he would do.  
With a smile on his face, and a nervous laugh,  
He took the last cookie and broke it in half.  
He offered her half, as he ate the other,  
She snatched it from him and thought... Oooh' brother!  
This guy's got some nerve and he's also rude,  
Why he didn't even show any gratitude!  
She had never known when she had been so galled,  
And she sighed with relief when her flight was finally called.  
She gathered her belongings and headed for the gate,  
Refusing to look back at the thieving ingrate.  
She boarded the plane, and sank in to her seat,  
Then she sought her book, which was almost complete.  
As she reached for her bag, she gasped with surprise,  
there was her bag of cookies, in front of her eyes.  
If mine are here, she moaned in despair,

The others were his, and he tried to share.  
Too late to apologize, she realized with grief,  
That she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief...

Perhaps we see ourselves as givers, sharing what's ours, but the truth is, ultimately nothing is ours. We simply take care of God's world. We're all takers. We're all the cookie thieves. Each of those packages of Oreo Cookies contains two cookies. I invite you to enjoy one and share the other with a cookie thief in your life. We're all undeserving of God's grace and abundance. Especially the gift of knowing God's Son, Jesus Christ. May God's love be your best blessing this Thanksgiving and every day of the year! May his grace keep you and his love surround you now and forever, amen.