

Text: John 6:22-35
Title: Good Ordinary Food
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There are two feasts early on in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Two feasts that could not be more different.

The first feast crackles with danger and foreboding. When Edmund finds himself in the sledge of the White Witch, with her white fur mantle over his shoulders, and a box with green silk ribbon on his lap. Filled with that which he hungered for the most: several pounds of sugar coated, rose-flavoured, Turkish Delight. Conjured by the Witch with her magic right before his eyes. And Edmund feasted on each square of delectable confection. Selling his siblings and betraying more than he knew for a box of magical food.

The second feast exudes warmth and abundance. When the four Pevensies follow Mr. Beaver to his home with Mrs. Beaver built on top of their dam. In this snug and cozy home, Peter, Susan and Lucy, all pitch in to set the table and then tuck into a feast of fresh-caught fried trout, boiled potatoes, buttered bread, creamy milk, ended with a “great and gloriously sticky marmalade roll” fresh out of the oven with a perfectly made pot of tea.

As Edmund watched his siblings and the Beavers pass plates and enjoy the good food on the table, he ate his full but didn't enjoy the taste. The memory of that first feast, the sweet taste of the magically conjured Turkish Delight on his tongue, numbed his taste buds to the second one. As Lewis describes it,

there's nothing that spoils the taste of good ordinary food half so much as the memory of bad magic food

After Edmund snuck out of the Beavers' house, driven by his hunger for more Turkish Delight, Mr. Beaver confessed that when he first laid eyes on Edmund, he thought to himself

Treacherous. He had the look of one who has been with the Witch and eaten her food. You can always tell them if you've lived long in Narnia, something about their eyes.

Now, we may not quite as harsh as Mr. Beaver, but we can be a little smug when it comes to Edmund and his hunger for Turkish Delight. We're quick to put some distance between ourselves and Edmund: I'd never sell out my family for a few pieces of candy. No matter how hungry. This especially goes for anyone who has actually tasted a version of Turkish Delight and been more than a little underwhelmed by the confection.

Edmund was a war-time kid. His life and childhood consisted of war-time rationing and constant fear of bombs and destruction. His hunger for a box of sugary treats was also a hunger for his life before the war when the world was safe. In a wartime world where he felt powerless and helpless, he hungered to feel powerful and the Witch offered him that with her promises to make him a king.

Edmund feasted on the bad magical food and empty promises of the White Witch, knowing in his heart that it was wrong, but not being able to stop hungering for more Turkish Delight.

Our hunger might not lead us to devouring a whole green silk ribbon tied box of bad magical food, but we help ourselves to that which doesn't satisfy all the same.

We hunger for connection and community, so we find ourselves scrolling endlessly on our screen as the algorithm of our preferred social media platform feeds us an endless assortment of what promises to connect us with others. But the more we scroll, the more isolated we are, more lonely, and more empty and unsatisfied with our life than before.

We hunger for intimacy and belonging, so we close the door and open our computer and click on the link we promised we wouldn't open again and gorge ourselves on the easy and undemanding naked images that porn so easily provides. And we find that our appetite for real human intimacy is numbed and deadened and so we go back to feast on more flickering pixels.

We hunger for purpose and appreciation, so we seek out success and accolades, sacrificing our closest relationships to stay at work longer hours, put in more time for that degree, that promotion, that bigger paycheck. And we find that there's always another thing to achieve, more work to do, and that no accolade, no achievement, ultimately satisfies our hunger for very long.

And the more we try to satisfy our hunger by feasting on our own version of bad magical food, the more hungry and the more empty we feel and the less able we are to enjoy the good ordinary food that actually nourishes us in body and soul.

The crowd that followed Jesus from one sea shore to another were hungry too.

They had just feasted together with thousands of others on the few loaves of bread that Jesus multiplied before their very eyes. Even though their stomachs were full, they still hungered for more. They intended to find Jesus and forcefully put a crown on his head to be their king against Caesar. Their appetite for freedom drove them to take whatever means necessary to overthrow those that persecuted them. They hungered for power and Jesus was the one who had it.

Jesus, knowing what they wanted to do, gave them the slip during the night. They hunted him down the next day by boat and by foot until they stood before him, demanding to know just how he gave them the slip and ready to pick up where they left off - making this powerful man their king.

Jesus knew what drove them. What they hungered for. What they would have him do for them. And Jesus confronts them about it:

You hunted me down across the Sea of Galilee not because you know who I really am, but because you feasted on the loaves of bread and filled your stomachs and you want more. Do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life.

The crowd was not deterred by Jesus' pushback. They point to Moses, the powerful leader of God's people, who fed God's people not just for one afternoon but for decades with daily bread. The crowd's hunger showed. They felt certain that when a powerful leader leads, his people do not go without. They were done going without.

Jesus redirects their hunger from a powerful man like Moses to the power and the presence of God who gives the bread from heaven that gives life to the world. And something clicks with the crowd. This is better bread. So they pray, plead, ask....no longer confrontational but with true hunger:

Please, always give us this bread!

Standing before them, Jesus answers their prayer. Declaring to them what their misdirected hunger for power blinded them to before - the very presence of God with them:

I am the bread of life you hunger for. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

The feast of loaves the day before, deepened the crowd's hunger pains for the power and presence of a King who could save them. But they wanted to fill their bellies with a quick fix and an easy out - a quick coronation and an earthly king. And here Jesus offers himself as the only One who could satisfy their hunger for a King who could save them. Just not in the way they expected. But in the way they deeply need.

Here at this table, at this feast spread before us, Jesus meets each of us. All of us.

Here at this table, Jesus meets us knowing our hunger for connection and community, for intimacy and belonging, for purpose and identity, for power and protection. And knowing all the ways we try to fill our bellies with that which doesn't satisfy.

Here at this table, Jesus stands ready to satisfy our longing, our hunger, with bread that doesn't spoil but endures to eternal life.

Here at this table, the Bread of life invites us to a feast of good ordinary food - bread and cup - a feast that exudes warmth and abundance, that draws us closer to one another and to the very presence of God in our midst. Not in the way we expect or demand, but in the way we deeply need.

When Edmund is on the cusp of dying. Hungry and thirsty. The knife of the Witch almost at his throat. The inevitable outcome of eating the that bad magical food. Aslan's rescue comes to Edmund. Strong arms embrace him. Lift him up. Untie him. And give him wine to drink. To restore him. To strengthen him. To save him. The first real food he is able to taste and to enjoy.

This morning, this Advent as we journey toward the manger in Bethlehem, the House of Bread, may you know your own hunger...

May you not ignore your hunger pains for deeper connection and community, for intimacy and belonging, for purpose and identity.

May the Spirit open your eyes to all the ways you are trying to fill that hunger with that which doesn't satisfy.

And here at this feast, may you know the strong arms of Jesus, lifting you up, offering you food and drink, his very body and blood, given for you. For your rescue. Transforming you, like Edmund, from betrayer to beloved.

And may we all feast on the good ordinary food that Christ promises to use for his extraordinary purposes - for us and for the life of the world.

Thanks be to God.