

Proper 14b: 8/9/15  
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Wasn't yesterday a beautiful day?  
And today, praise God, is supposed to be more of the same.  
It was so beautiful that even though I had a lot to do  
I felt it only right to take a walk to enjoy God's green earth.  
So I treated myself to a visit to one of my favorite state parks  
and did just that.

It was a very nice walk.  
*Until ...* I returned to my car and saw that  
the front passenger window had been shattered.  
Shards of glass were strewn inside and out.  
It didn't take long to realize that my purse had been stolen –  
including credit cards, fancy new glasses and, yes,  
the handwritten draft of today's sermon.

Now I'm well aware that in the scheme of things,  
this was a mercifully minor mishap. And for that I am thankful.  
But I will admit that it was more than a little unsettling.  
And so I stood there shell-shocked for a few minutes  
letting it sink in,  
figuring out what to do next.

As I was standing there surrounded by all that broken glass,  
a young woman came up to me  
and quietly handed me this. [Shows water bottle]  
Still a bit disoriented, I said,  
"What? I mean, thanks. But not now."  
But she smiled gently and said, "Please."

And, well, here I am. [Takes a swig of water]

It seems to be hard-wired into us to want to offer  
some kind of sustenance in times of need to show we care.  
What do we do when someone's had surgery or  
lost a loved one?

Call out the casserole brigade!  
 What about when someone we love has a birthday?  
 Bake a cake!  
 When a couple has an anniversary?  
 They might go out for a nice dinner.

I contend that this urge to share food together to show we care  
 is hard-wired into us by God.  
 Stories like this abound throughout scripture,  
 including a couple of examples here today.  
 I do love this snippet of a reading from our first lesson,  
 the OT book of I Kings.

Threatened with death by the evil queen Jezebel  
 (yes, there really was an evil queen Jezebel!),  
 the prophet Elijah flees into the wilderness.  
 There an angel – a *messenger* of the Lord –  
 offers him bread and, well, a bottle of water.  
 This practical-minded angel persists,  
 a second time urging Elijah, saying,  
 “Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.”

“Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.”

Ain't that the truth?  
 Haven't we all at one time or another felt that life's journey  
 was getting to be too much for us?  
 That we were bereft or dissatisfied or stale?  
 Be it physically or spiritually or both?

Jesus is the bread of life,  
 we hear in today's gospel  
 just after he's fed a crowd of 5,000 hungry bodies and souls.  
 He is the living bread which comes down from heaven  
 to sustain us,  
 and to show us how to sustain others along life's journey.

One of the happier stops along my path this week  
 was at the home of a young family  
 who'd just had their second child.  
 I held their newborn just three days old.

I chatted with their three year old who'd  
just begun the journey from only child to big brother.

As I was leaving, their wise grandmother came in carrying  
the fixin's for a simple 4-ingredient cookie recipe  
that she and the new big brother were going to make,  
ostensibly for his swimming teacher.  
Thoughtful, yes?

But who all were those cookies really going to nurture?  
I bet the swimming teacher did receive and appreciate her cookies.  
The parents and newborn got the gift of time to get settled.  
And what about the little boy?

By being in the kitchen with his grandmother  
mixing those four cookie ingredients together,  
that new big brother got the message  
that he was **still special**;  
that there was **love enough** to go around –  
enough even that he could **share it with others**.

Somewhere along the line,  
that young lady who gave me her water bottle  
must've gotten a similar message.

In fact, we all get that message  
from Jesus the bread of life  
who feeds us with his very life.  
Who cares about us and *all* creatures, spiritually and physically.  
Who fills us with God's love and mercy and goodness  
and sends us out as *messengers* to show others –  
in ways both big and small –  
that God's love is aplenty for them too.

Eat up – drink in – the bread of life!  
Share the bounty of God's love far and wide,  
lest the journey be too much.

