

# Let us be bread...

## Proper 18

**Proverbs 22:1-2**

**Psalm 125**

**James 2:1-17**

**Mark 7:24-37**

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I'm tired. Today's scripture readings just make me even more tired as they trigger all my pent-up frustration with the hypocrisy and mudslinging that seems to abound these days in our nation and the world. I am tired of the hate, both the in-your-face and the subtle passive-aggressive varieties. Tired of people thinking that their "rights" supersede all others and the pervasive "Me, Myself, and I" mentality. Tired of people who mock and scorn those who don't meet self-created criteria for sharing the air they breathe and the ground upon which they walk. I am tired of people using others for their own gain and taking advantage of those they think are beneath them. Tired of rhetoric that is meaningless or serves only to divide.

Tired of those who twist the words of Holy Scripture to justify their actions that cause harm to others. Tired of those who see feeding the hungry as an oppressive burden but find nothing wrong with waging war or lining their pockets with money as children go hungry. I am tired of people hunkering down in their own righteousness, unwilling to open their minds to something different, particularly when their entire knowledge of a subject came from sound bites and memes. Tired of hearing school shootings described as a "fact of life." Tired of trying to open ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to love only to be met by stonewalls surrounding someone's entrenched ego.

What about you? Are you tired of these things and more? I call this type of tiredness, Moses-tired. You remember Moses- the guy who led around a bunch of stubborn Israelites in the wilderness for forty years? If you read his story straight through, you get a sense of how tired he was much of the time, not from the wandering, but from trying to keep the Israelites on the Godly path. And maybe, James, the writer of today's epistle was Moses-tired as well because he begins today's passage with an admonishment, "My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?" I imagine if James had Christ's commandments on stone tablets, he would be tempted to throw them down in anger, smashing them at the feet of Christ's followers just as Moses did with The Ten Commandments.

Don't worry. I'm not smashing any tablets today, but I do want all of us to consider when our silence on a subject might have been interpreted as approval. When we have taken advantage of

others, particularly those who have no voice. Consider when we have rallied around the rich and famous while ignoring those on the margins. When our actions didn't align with our words. When our faith served only to lift ourselves rather than our neighbors as well. As we hear in today's epistle, "...faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

Doing the work of our faith is tiring. Even Jesus, spreading his Gospel message of love through actions as well as words, got tired. In our Gospel reading, Jesus was tired. He wanted to be alone. But like a mother who hides in the bathroom to find a moment of peace from her children's constant calling of "mom," Jesus is unable to find a moment of alone time. No matter where he is, someone comes toddling to the door and knocks.

And he always answers no matter how worn out he is, even if the way he answers varies. While we normally hear Jesus respond with gentleness or concern, today is not one of those days. He answers gruffly with the Gentile woman, and his response to the deaf man is punctuated with a sigh, a long-suffering sigh I suspect. When we are tired and worn out, sometimes our weariness comes through as harsh words and the appearance of anger or disappointment. But if Jesus isn't immune to letting his weariness drive his response to others, then neither are we.

Did you know that sighing is a way to relieve stress? It triggers the 'rest and digest' part of the nervous system that puts us into a more relaxed state. So, sigh often when the world threatens to drag you down and remember that when someone sighs around you, it is about them and not about you.

Even Jesus' response to the Gentile woman is more about his own tiredness and understanding than it is about her request. He could have refused to listen or ponder her words. He could have refused to open his mind and heart to changing the way he thought about the world and his ministry. But he didn't. I do suspect that he heaved a heavy, internal sigh and maybe even closed his eyes for a moment before his harsh words changed to gentleness when he told her that her daughter was healed. Through all the challenges that Jesus faced, he continued to be the bread that fed hungry souls and the wine that slaked spiritual thirst.

When we find ourselves worn out and tired of the seemingly endless struggle to walk the Godly path, remembering that Jesus got tired too can help us move forward. Recalling that even in his tiredness, Jesus continued to be bread and wine to people around him can help us muster the energy to stand up and do the work that Christ has given us do. The hard work of sharing God's love for everyone to everyone.

It is a challenge sometimes to follow Christ's commands to love our neighbor, even more so the closer we get to any election or policy change. Yet that is what we are called to do, to love others and to be bread and wine to the world. The hymn "Let Us Be Bread" (Porter, 1990) that we will sing later in the service sums up how we are called to live as followers of Christ. Take it home. Put it on your refrigerator. Find a YouTube music video of it that you can listen to wherever you are. And when you find yourself tired and weary on the long path that is the way of love, listen to it, read it, or sing it. Heave a deep sigh. Close your eyes and let the Holy Spirit flow into you giving you the much-needed energy to keep on loving our neighbors and bringing life to the world.

Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord,  
broken and shared, life for the world.  
Let us be wine, love freely poured.  
let us be one in the Lord.

Amen

## Works Cited

Porter, T. J. (1990). Let Us Be Bread. GIA Publications.

Let Us Be Bread

Refrain:

Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord,  
broken and shared, life for the world.  
Let us be wine, love freely poured.  
let us be one in the Lord.

Verse 1:

I am the bread of life, broken for all.  
Eat now and hunger no more. (refrain)

Verse 2:

You are my friend if you keep my commands,  
No longer servants but friends. (refrain)

Verse 3:

See how my people have nothing to eat.  
Give them the bread that is you. (refrain)

Verse 4:

As God has love me so I have love you.  
Go and live on in my love. (refrain)

YouTube music video (one of at least) by Jack Terrell-Wilkes; from Ascension Lutheran Church  
Minister of Music Mark Johanson plays and sings Thomas J. Porter's "Let Us Be Bread".  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkSW9M6oVfA>