

Fourth Sunday in Advent – December 20, 2015
Text: Micah 5:2-5a
Theme: "Bread is not just bread"

I did not know what store bought bread tasted like until I was in middle school. My mother made homemade bread every week. I used to envy the guys at lunch who had their sandwiches on Wonder Bread. Wonder Bread had all kinds of cool commercials on during Saturday morning cartoons. Man. Why did I have to eat that disgusting homemade bread when all the cool guys had Wonder Bread? Then I tasted Wonder Bread and began to learn a lesson about the difference between commercial hype and reality. I was at my friend's house and his mother made us sandwiches for lunch. Bologna on Wonder Bread. I had never experienced bread that turned into gummy paste in your mouth and apparently served no function but to hold mustard against your bologna.

In many countries, even today, bread is a staple and may be the peoples' main source of nutrition. Often, we think of bread as a condiment, not a main course. But for the people of the Middle East, and particularly in the prophet Micah's day, bread is necessary for life. So when the Savior comes from Bethlehem, which means, "the house of bread," and later, when the Savior calls himself "the bread of life," it is perhaps more meaningful to people who survive on bread than it is to people such as us who

tend to take it for granted. Even if you buy really high quality bread, store-bought bread can never even approach the texture and flavor of real, homemade bread. It is hard to equate Jesus with Wonder Bread with no substance or taste.

But to people who survive on Bread, it makes a great deal more sense. Micah tells his people that the Savior will come from "the house of bread," a humble little town just like the humble little loaf after which it is called. But in all its humility, bread conveys life to Micah's people. Luther points out in the meaning of the 4th petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," what is meant by bread. Turn in your hymnals to page 324, the top of the right column.

"What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

Bread is everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body...even psychological things like reputation and friendship. Bread is really everything that God gives us, so when

we pray for bread from the house of bread that gives the bread of life, we are talking about Christ himself who says to us when we receive the bread at Holy Communion, "Take eat, this is my body. This do in remembrance of me."

Micah could not have known all that was going to happen but he understood that this one who would come from the house of bread would not only bring peace, but he would *BE* peace incarnate. He would give a peace that the world cannot give because he would not only nourish us and protect us from all evil but he would ultimately be the all-powerful, ever-present, all-loving ruler of our lives. Micah could not have known everything but he knew that bread from the house of bread was not *just* bread. He knew that the one whose birth we celebrate in just a few days would change our world by feeding us bread that would ultimately take us out of this sinful world and deliver us to him in a new world of peace, love and forgiveness, a world that was and is hard to comprehend as sinful human beings in a sin fallen world.

Today we take a few more days to prepare ourselves to celebrate the bread of life who came at that first Christmas and who will return for us soon. How soon is soon? I don't know but it cannot be soon enough. So, in the midst of all the spending, wrapping, unwrapping and returning that will happen between

now and next Sunday, remember that, in the end, all that material part of our lives is just as simple as Wonder Bread. None of the gifts we receive will last eternally. Few of the things we give will make an eternal difference in a person's life unless you are giving a Bible.

We are fickle beings. We know that God provides everything we need and we know that whatever we do not have is exactly what we are not supposed to have and yet we catch ourselves accidentally wanting that which we do not have. We are happy with God when he gives us what we want but sometimes the bread he gives is not Wonder Bread. His bread is complex, heavy and sometimes even difficult to chew. Sometimes, we think the gooey mush of a Wonder Bread life would be better. It would no doubt be easier, but not better. It looks a lot better than it really is. We think that new gizmo or gadget is just what we want. We imagine that if we can just have this or do that, then we'll be happy. But then we begin to chew and all of our fantasies wind up being a clump of paste stuck to the roofs of our mouths.

True bread comes from the House of Bread and he is the bread of life. He is heavy, complex, and rich. In the end, he is everything we truly want and everything we need. He feeds us with his own

body and blood, forgives all our sins and makes us ready for his glorious return.