

Feeding Body, Mind and Spirit

Rev. Jim Cullen – June 27, 2010

As June draws to a close we move into the summer season. It is a season when we bring together, warmer weather, long days, perhaps some vacation, perhaps just spending time outdoors working in a garden, reading a book, watching the sunset, and more outdoor meals. There are a lot of good things that can happen in the summer.

In our worship today (*we bring together outdoor worship and a shared meal*). We have the opportunity to think about God's created world and our part in it and our responsibility for it. We have the opportunity to acknowledge the source of our food. And we go back to our first understanding of God, that being the God of Creation.

We have seen and heard the slogan "If you have eaten today thank a farmer." It is a catchy phrase that reminds us of how we have food to eat. This morning we think about the basic and essentials of life and how we are beneficiaries.

We acknowledge the continuing change in the farm scene. The number of Canadian farms has declined by 11% since 1996. There are many reasons: domestic and global economic factors, technological changes and innovations, changes in consumer tastes, weather and environmental issues. For every 10 farm operations that "counted themselves in" in 1996, 7 still exist, while 3 left the agriculture sector. Yet new operations are still entering the sector: about 50,000 new farms. Farm production is up, more hogs, more cattle and poultry. Farmers haven't found more land; they convert unproductive land to cropland. Unimproved pasture is being managed to improve its feed value. Exports are up, livestock numbers are up, greenhouse and grapes are expanding. These are a few trends in a changing business. The family farm is a major business venture.

In the 40 some years that I have had some knowledge of "the county" I have seen the transition from canning factories processing local tomatoes, peas and corn. That is gone. Today we have 23 wineries plus 18 vineyards.

When we gather for worship on special occasions we often have symbols to help us understand and remember. There is bread and wine on the communion table. We have Advent and Lenten candles. We have Easter lilies. This morning I offer you four symbols to help us think about God's wondrous world and our place in it: Soil, Seeds, Water, and Gloves. These represent what they are and they remind us of some spiritual connections.

Jesus told many stories. He told a story about God as a farmer sowing seeds in the hearts of people. He said, "Listen! A sower went forth to sow." People responded to the seed in different ways. Some rejected it and so the

seeds did not grow. Other people let the seed grow in their lives, and produced a bumper crop.

Soil: This soil represents many things for us. It is life and it is work. It is stability and the sustenance of our very being. Without the richness and the nourishment of the land, there would be no harvest, and no thanksgiving of joy for the abundance of God. Therefore, we rejoice in the land. We tend it and care for it just as it cares for us. And, at the end, it is to the soil we return. We seek God's understanding in the care of this gift.

Seeds: The seeds represent many things for us. They are the seeds of faith and hope, the faith that Jesus taught in the scriptures. They are the faith that God will nurture our souls and our bodies. They are the hope that God's providence will never fail. They represent the seeds that we plant in the ground. God provided the very seeds that, although we till and nurture it is God causes to grow. They are the seeds from which the abundance that feeds us all in body and soul. These are the seeds for which we give thanks to God.

Water: This water represents for us the gifts of God. This water is God's creation. It falls down to bring life to all creation. Water gives sustenance and nourishment to the soil and seed. God blesses the soil and the seed with the rain that falls.

As we follow the events in the Gulf of Mexico we are very aware of what is happening to the water around us. The other day the cap that was slowing the flow of oil was knocked off by a robot allowing 104,000 gallons an hour to escape. It is difficult to imagine how serious this situation is. No one really knows how to stop it. The pressure is so great and it is 5000 feet down on the ocean floor with a capsized oil platform on top of it. This is but one example where water is being polluted by human activity.

Water is the symbol used at baptism. Water quenches our thirst, cleanses us and refreshes us. We give thanks to God for the water that gives and sustains life.

Hands: These gloves represent the labour of our hands. Hands that are called to be stewards of the land, hands that are given special talents, hands that are strengthened and guided by God.

I like the way this is summed up in a hymn (297) in Voices United

*All praise to you, O God of all creation,
You make the world and it is yours alone,
The planet earth you spun in its location
Amide the stars adorning heavens dome.
We lease the earth but for a life's duration,
Yet for this life it is our cherished home.*