

SERMON BY REV W HUIZINGA

ON GOD'S WORD

FROM DEUTERONOMY 8:3 + LUKE 4:4

FOR THANKSGIVING AND FOR LABOR + CROPS

Liturgy

Votum and Salutation

Hymn 57:1,2

The Words of the Covenant

Psalm 65:2,3

Prayer for the Opening of God's Word

Thankoffering

Psalm 65:4,5,6

Read - Deuteronomy 8 and Luke 4:1-14

Text - Deut 8:3 and Luke 4:4

Sermon

YOU SHALL LIVE BY EVERY WORD

FROM THE MOUTH OF THE LORD.

1. Do not live by bread alone.

2. Live from every Word of God.

Psalm 128

Pastoral Prayer

Hymn 57:3,4

Benediction

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Droughts in the wheat-belt in the Eastern states; rains arrive too late in WA wheat-belts; cyclones damage the banana and sugar cane crops; and cane toads threaten to invade WA.

Did you keep up with such news?

Did this concern you? Did you care?

Are you only interested because bread and cereals may cost more?

Are you only interested in seeing the prices of bananas come down again?

Being city-dwellers, you can often stand at a distance from what our farmers have to battle. We care little for the battlers out by Lake Grace or Merredin. As long as the stores carry plenty of products, who cares where they come from? If WA cannot produce them, import them from elsewhere.

Yet it is a pity, because you forget to see and experience how your LORD directs all things.

To see a waving wheat field basking in the golden, sinking sun is a scene for a calendar. Have you seen the land harvested? The rotating blades of the combines digest the golden wheat-fields.

Remember the joyous harvest feasts – the feast of booths and the feast of weeks – of Israel of old. Those feasts meant so much to them. They brought the tenth, the tithe, to the LORD in recognition that the whole harvest belonged to the LORD. Our generous Lord allowed the farmer to have 90%! This means a lot to farmers. Yes, harvest time means much to crop-farmers. It means much to fruit-growers and veggie-growers.

Yet how much are you concerned about all this? Oh, if storms ruin crops and the price goes up, then you sit up and pay attention.

Otherwise, it concerns you little.

Thanksgiving and harvest! At the same time we hold a prayer service for the coming year, praying for God's blessing over our labours.

Brothers and sisters, at the outset our churches decided that our climate here allows for multiple crops, for more than one harvest time; allows for a variety of crops which ripen at different times of the year.

Moreover, Australia is a diverse land. They thus decided to hold one harvest feast. Since most members laboured in something other than working the land, they decided to combine this feast with a prayer service for the crops and for our labours. This is what we have today.

To do justice to all this we have turned to two texts that speak about your daily needs, your labours, as well as about the products of the land – bread. I preach to you the Word of God under this THEME:

YOU SHALL LIVE BY EVERY WORD

FROM THE MOUTH OF THE LORD.

1. Do not live by bread alone.

2. Live from every Word of God.

1. Do not live by bread alone.

John publicly baptised Jesus at the Jordan River (Luke 3:21-22). God anointed Him, publicly declaring that Jesus is *my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. How the Devil tries to abuse this announcement! Is He the Son of God? Well, let's see! Yet it is true. The Holy Spirit came down on Him and stayed on Him, anointing Jesus to office and equipping Him for office. John announces publicly, *Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*; Jesus is the promised One, the Coming One!

Brothers and sisters, boys and girls, remember from your catechism lessons what *anointed One* means. God anoints people to an office. The Holy Spirit makes them ready for that office. Jesus has the three-fold office of prophet, priest and king. During these temptations in the wilderness Jesus exercises this three-fold office. As prophet He speaks from the Scriptures, appealing to what has said. As priest He suffers, being tempted. As king He enters battle with the arch-enemy, the Devil, and Jesus triumphs.

Note how the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. The Spirit wanted Jesus to concentrate, to meditate, on his ministry, the most important ministry. The Devil takes the opportunity to tempt Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, boys and girls, if you remember the story of the first temptation and what happened, then you will know. In the beginning, God created a beautifully ordered world, with a beautiful Garden of Eden where God placed the first man and the woman. Here the Devil entered, tempting the woman with the fruit of the forbidden tree. The Devil succeeded. In fact, the man and woman took the side of the Serpent over-against God. God did not allow this to stay. God decreed enmity between the Serpent and the woman, between the seed of the Serpent and the seed of the woman. The Serpent would bite the heel of the woman's male child, but the male child would crush the head of the Serpent. You all know this true story.

Well here is the long-awaited male seed of the Woman – Jesus. And here comes the Devil. A battle royal looms!

Brothers and sisters, boys and girls, I have preached to you the record of Jesus' birth, his family tree. Since we chose a text from Luke, let's use the family tree Luke gives (3:23-38) of Jesus. Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham, the son of Adam, the son of God! Yes, the son of Adam, the male child whom God promised to Eve, the mother of all the living. This male child will crush the head of the Serpent. Do you think that the Devil knows this? Very definitely! The demons knew who Jesus was even when pious church-leaders did not! They knew all right! Why did the Devil instigate Herod to kill all the baby boys in Bethlehem? To kill that one baby boy, Jesus, the promised male child! But God protected Jesus. The Devil was furious.

Jesus finally starts his ministry. Anointed with the Holy Spirit God now sends Him out to fulfill all what is written in the scrolls of the prophets about Him. The Spirit fills Him, stays with Him to equip

Him for his three-fold office. He is ready to start his work. The anointed One, the Messiah, is ready to tackle the Serpent, to crush his head. The Devil, in furious anxiety, immediately pursues Him, like a Rhodesian Ridge-back on the blood-trail of the lion.

Let's look at this very real temptation. Please remember that Jesus is the real, hundred percent flesh-and-blood son of Mary. He has a complete human heart, soul and mind. Affections, anger, sympathy, compassion, hunger, thirst, and a yearning for mutual love are all things that affected him too. Never underestimate the effects of his temptations on his real human nature. Let us never say, *oh yes, but He was really God, so these things did not affect him*. No, for then you would reduce the temptation; lessen the encounter between Jesus and the Devil. Remember, the first people, the first Adam, failed miserably. God now looks to the second Adam. This Adam is your Substitute, a real human Mediator. Of course you do not deny Jesus is also the full son of God, God. It is a miracle in your eyes how one person can be both, fully God and fully man. It goes beyond what you can understand.

In Luke 4 we read **Jesus fasted for forty days**.

Fasting! Jews fasted twice per week – Tuesdays and Thursdays. Jesus mentions fasting in his Sermon on the Mount. He lists giving alms, praying, and fasting as three important virtues. Jews made a great show of fasting. But Jesus wanted godly fasting, not just a show of sadness.

Not a bad idea, you might think. Instead of feasting on Thanksgiving Day we and our nation are better off fasting, seeing most of us are overweight.

Brothers and sisters, boys and girls, this would miss the point. This fasting is spiritual, not just physical. Jesus has just been ordained into his ministry. Before He enters the public arena the Spirit drives him out into the wilderness, the place where God had prepared his people to live as his holy, chosen nation.

Note the parallelism. The LORD diverts his people into the wilderness past Mt Sinai, to train and to test them. They suffer hunger. They wander in the wilderness for forty years! The wilderness was where God took them aside in order to meet with them, in order to reveal his will to them, and to declare his covenant with them. Here in the wilderness He also tested them. Here He demonstrated his power, his faithfulness, his care for their daily needs, and his protection against enemies. God does the same with Jesus. God trains and tests Him. God will take care of Him. For forty days He meets with his God and Father.

This is a training ground to equip Jesus for spiritual combat with the Devil and the demons. Jesus prays, and seeks his Father. Jesus meditates on the Bible, on his program. Did God not give Moses 40 days on the mountain to prepare him to be the mediator of Israel? Did Paul not retreat in Arabia to prepare for his momentous, missionary labours? Yes, this is a spiritual retreat to train and test him.

God fully equipped the Messiah's person. The Holy Spirit conceived Him. He was born of the virgin Mary, holy and yet fully human. The Father anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Now Jesus must put all that to work.

What a long time to go without food! After 40 days Jesus suffered extreme hunger. Famished to the point of total exhaustion, you might do almost anything for food and drink. Did Esau not sell his birthright for a bowl of stew, when he was on the point of death?

For example, you are to go for a minor operation. The doctor tells you, *no food after supper, no drink after midnight!* No breakfast in the morning! No cup of tea! Terrible! But it becomes worse. Your operation becomes postponed till late in the day at 6 p.m. No food! No drink! Ravenously hungry you return to the hospital! You cannot wait till after the operation to have a decent meal. But after the operation you do not even want a meal or a drink!

Jesus at first concentrated on his ministry. Seeking God in prayer, He focuses his whole mind on what lies ahead for Him. He does not think of food or drink. To do his Father's will is his bread and butter.

But at the end his stomach growls in protest.

Then the Devil attacks. Hard! Without mercy! Now is his opportunity. Crack Jesus!

Many today cry out for bread. They will steal, rob or beg. Whatever! Desperate people do desperate things!

In wartime many beg for some food! Please, we are starving!

What could the Devil use to tempt Jesus? Later on Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount teaches – *what father is there who if his son asks for bread gives him a stone; or a serpent instead of a fish?* Well, the Devil could tell Jesus: *your Father in heaven is better than all fathers.* The Accuser could add:

Will He then give you stones instead of bread? Turn some of the stones here in this desert into bread. You are the Son of God. Are you not the angel of the LORD who commanded Israel, who led them; who rained manna on them daily, and who brought water out of hard granite? Surely, you can do this!

Will Jesus listen to the scheming Serpent or serve God?

Christ's response comes straight from the Bible. Jesus has a high view of Scripture. His Father issues his orders for Him in Scripture.

Man shall not live by bread alone. This is a quote from Deut 8:3, a chapter we have read. Moses rehearses what happened in the wilderness. First Israel suffered hunger. No bread! What to do? Here too God tested them to see what lived in their hearts. Would they concentrate on Him and his teachings, his orders? Or did they have their own human priorities? They complained long and hard to Moses. Poor Moses took the brunt of their threatening, violent complaints. *Why did you take us out of Egypt?* At least we had leeks and onions; *we sat by the pots of meat and we ate bread to the full in Egypt. You*

have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger (Ex 16:3)!

You see what lived in their hearts. They worried about the mundane problem of bread. Protesting loudly, they demonstrated how daily bread was their number one priority. Trust in the LORD who wondrously rescued them from slavery did not come into the picture. That was ancient history!

Today in our society our government needs to concentrate on basics such as water supply. No one will deny we need to manage our water supplies carefully. Yet people grumble threateningly about it. Politicians play their little games about it. Yes, our materialistic age worries greatly about climate change, about droughts, and about lack of water. What is all this going to do to them and to their children? Why do they complain and why do they worry? They have no Father in heaven! They trust in no God but themselves! Their daily food is high priority, near the top of their list.

So this text speaks to you today.

In his patient and merciful manner the LORD then promised bread from heaven - *manna* (meaning, *what is it?*). Daily they received enough for one day only. On the sixth day God provided twice that amount! This was no accident. God controlled it. His commands from his mouth completely controlled this supply of daily wonder-bread.

God rules, upholding all things by the power of his Word. This is so clear. How else can one feed a traveling multitude in a wilderness?

God gave all their daily needs, as we read in Deut 8:4 - *your garments did not wear out on you (for forty years!!), nor did your feet swell these forty years*. Everything they needed daily - footwear and clothing - did not need to be replaced for 40 years! Amazing!

Yet how often did they not concentrate on these daily necessities - food, meat and drink. They murmured! They complained bitterly! They threatened to **kill Moses!**

Today people operate by the motto, ***man lives by bread***. You are what you eat! Food halls in our malls do a smacking good business. People concentrate on economics, obsessed with it. Money, bread, meat and drink! Man lives by bread!

Brothers and sisters, boys and girls, remind yourselves at start of a season that all these basics come from God, by the power of his Word. Jesus upholds all things, provides all things by power of his Word, by what proceeds from his mouth. As Jesus teaches in his Sermon on the Mount, trust in your Father to provide these things. But do not concentrate on them. Do not complain. Focus your attention on God's kingdom and his righteousness, says Jesus.

Do we want the Devil to turn stones into bread so we need not work? I call this the *Lotto mentality*? Line up at the news-agency to buy Lotto tickets. Strike it rich and you need not work for the rest of your lives, they think. What a poor mentality!

No, we work heartily, energetically in dependence on God. He gives health to work. God's Word directs our whole life. We need Him.

Psalm 127 teaches us that without the Lord's blessing all is in vain.

You do not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds from mouth of the LORD.

2. Live from every Word of God

Yes, let us finish with that.

Has God not provided all you needed in the past year? Do we not enjoy beautiful homes, powerful vehicles, and a smorgasbord of food for all tastes? We celebrate God's goodness to you. Thanksgiving Day!

But today you also look ahead to a year of labour, at home, in church, in school and in society. How do you approach your tasks in life? Our text addresses this very point.

Jesus' own life sets the model for you to follow. He is busy, but not preoccupied with food. No, He often sought refuge. Often He retreated for time to seek God. To commune with God! How often do you do that? Jesus prayed. He needed that. Jesus always sought the Scriptures. What does God say in the Bible?. He sought everything that comes from God's mouth. His mission was to fulfill everything written in the Scriptures about Him. For example, He wanted water only to fulfill his task on the cross.

Live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

Remember how God's right hand, Jesus, controls all things by the Word of his power. So this is a broad statement. Yet in the context this means Israel should pay attention to everything He revealed to them, at Mt Sinai and during the whole wilderness journey. Seek God. Seek his kingdom and its righteousness.

You should also meditate on everything from God's mouth, from the Bible. Study and search it to follow God's will. Do this at home. Let there be good family worship which includes Bible reading, prayer and singing. Take time for personal Bible reading and study. Retreat to your room to find quiet so you can concentrate on the Lord's teachings for your life. Prepare yourself so that you can make a worthwhile contribution at the Bible-study clubs. And attend those clubs. You have time, resources, and freedom in this country. Do you need to have these privileges taken away before you use them?

In life we take time to upgrade our degrees or certificates. We attend evening courses. As a result we sometimes cannot come to study-clubs or catechism. That is not good! Upgrade yourself, but not at the cost of living by every word that comes from God's mouth.

Do not be too busy earning bread so that there is no time to study God's Word. Then you make a public statement, *I am ruled by bread, not by everything from God's mouth.* Brothers and sisters, boys and girls, pray about this.

God gave all they needed for heart, soul and spirit. He delivered all his teachings, his whole covenant. Deuteronomy is the book of the covenant. Everything is included.

You are anointed too. Devil targets you too in the year ahead, if

you enter God's service with zeal. Be trained in Scripture. Discern when others quote selectively, quote out of context, and quote to destroy. Learn to give scriptural answers.

In your labours this year, remember *you shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*. Amen.