



Send Me to Bake Bread Martha Chambers

“Sir, they said, “from now on give us this bread.” Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” John 6: 34-35 NIV

This scripture was the basis for the beginning of a scholarship fund in memory of my dad, Rev. Leo E. Smith, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister who answered the call to ministry on Mother’s Day 1950. Upon his death in 2006, I had a strong desire to do something that would carry on his ministry in Arkansas Presbytery. Dad was very fond of the sour dough bread that I had made for about 20 years. He often joked about building me a bread shop on a corner by the road in front of his house. Since I had always given the bread away, the thought of selling it didn’t feel right to me. But when God placed the idea in my heart to sell the bread in my dad’s memory, it felt like the right thing to do.

There are many scripture passages that talk about bread. It seems that the simplest of things are sometimes those that make the most difference. What little boy would have ever dreamed that his lunch would feed five thousand people? Think about his mother as she prepared that lunch for him. Was she just thinking about her son, or was there another voice that she was hearing? These are questions to which we will never know the answers.

Matthew 4 talks about the temptation of Jesus when Satan told him to turn the stones into bread. Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” We look at The Lord’s Prayer and find that Jesus was concerned about our daily needs. We need daily bread, both physical and spiritual. We continue to celebrate the Lord’s supper with the breaking of bread as Jesus did with the disciples when he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” In looking at these scriptures it seemed appropriate to set up a scholarship in Dad’s honor to expand his legacy as a testimony to his love for the Lord, for the life he lived, and for his ministry.

This will be the 11th year “Martha Bread,” as it is affectionately called, will provide \$500.00 for a ministerial candidate toward their cost for the Program of Alternate Studies or seminary. The challenge went out at General Assembly a few years ago for churches, groups, or individuals to raise \$2000 for the Stott-Wallace Missionary Offering for missionaries’ salaries and benefits. When I heard the challenge, that still small voice came to me saying, “Martha, you can do that selling bread.” There was no question in my mind that the message was from God. I also knew that I could do it. Once again, the challenge went out during a retreat I attend, and for the second time I answered the call to raise \$2000 for missionaries.

With references to bread running all through the scriptures, bread making seems appropriate for those who go about sharing the gospel. Whatever God calls us to do, He equips us for the task, even something as simple as making bread. God only asks for a willing heart to

do His will and share His love with those around us. So until God calls again, I will try to be faithful and listen for that still small voice. God continues to bless the bread.

Reflections

1. Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-2. This scripture refers to taking risks because life is short. “Be generous: Invest in acts of charity. Charity yields high returns. Don’t hoard your goods; spread them around. Be a blessing to others. This could be your last night.” Ecc. 11:1-2 The Message. Discuss how Martha took a risk in setting a goal of making bread to raise \$2,000.00 for our missionaries, not once, but twice.
2. Which of the scriptures about bread in Martha’s story speaks to you? Compare spiritual bread with physical bread. Why do you think Jesus called himself the bread of life?

Call to Action

1. List some ways your circle might use bread to minister to others or practice hospitality such as to keep a few loaves of home made bread in the freezer to give to visitors at worship or to persons who have not attended for some time.
2. Discuss how your group could bake bread to sell in order to raise funds for a mission project. Set your goal high and take the risk as Martha does.

Prayer

Merciful God, many of your children are in need of bread to fill their empty stomachs. Teach us to be compassionate. Stand with us as you stood with Jesus in his time of temptation, so that we will not be greedy, and will not put our wants above the needs of others. We pray for those who hunger in this land; whose only kitchen is a soup kitchen, and whose only food is what others don’t want. Lord, feed your people using our skills and conscience, and eradicate apathy to hunger from our politics and private lives. Bless Martha as she continues to bake bread for the building up of your kingdom. Fill our vacant hearts with spiritual bread, the bread of life. We pray this in the name of Jesus who gave His all because of His great love for us. Amen.