

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." 4Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" 5Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" 9Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' 11and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" 12Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.*

There is no law against turning stones into bread.

If one of you comes to me next week asking, "Am I allowed to turn stones into bread if I get really hungry?" I'll probably respond, "If you can do that go right ahead."

I wonder why Jesus did not.

We read that Jesus had been forty days without food. Forty days is a lot of hunger. I would consider forty days a sufficient test. Jesus was famished.

God did not create us for hunger - for pain, for longing.

I understand when someone comes to me and says, "I was lonely and I needed someone, and I found someone." God understands.

God did not create us for hunger.

I understood when Susanne talked to me so many years ago. "I am being excluded, I don't drink at the parties, I don't go to the parties, I get A's and all the rest are angry at me for that. Should I join the crowd, go along, give in to them?"

Surely God did not create us for hunger.

Or in my own home: "You cannot watch that show." "But Dad, tomorrow at school everyone will be talking about this show. I'll be the one on the outside."

God did not create us for hunger.

Frankly it is easier to talk about children than about me. My life looks just like the lives of my unbelieving neighbors. Same mortgage, same running off to the golf course when I have some free time, same saving for retirement. I fit in by satisfying my hungers, seeking my security, my relaxation. I tell myself: God did not create us for hunger.

So many of you belong to AARP. When my turn comes I probably will also. And we will be part of a lobby that is intent to see that we will get what is ours, even if it comes at the expense of our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. Social Security, Medicare because we believe in all our hearts: God did not create us for hunger - me for hunger.

But when the Son of God had hungered for forty days and the devil invited that a stone might become bread, Jesus said, "One does not live by bread alone."

If we will not live by bread alone, satisfying whatever hungers come along, then by what will we live?

How easy it is to answer that question for my neighbor. "You should live by God's word, never by satisfying hungers."

And so a Lutheran church rose up a year ago, held the Holy Scriptures high, and struck down a statement that said that people who have a sexual hunger for people of their own sex might satisfy that hunger. "God's word says," we declared to one another. The Sexuality statement was put out of its misery.

But when the poor are hungry and we have some bread to share but do not, because now the issue is me and not them, I think surely God did not intend that I should risk being hungry. For God did not create me for hunger. I build bigger barns to store more, I borrow against tomorrow that I might feast today. And my hungry neighbor gets but a crust.

Yes, how easy it is to know that my neighbor should live by God's word, while I have no intention of doing so.

For God did not create me for hunger.

We do have God's word. Surely that is sufficient. God's word and not our hungers can direct us. At least we expect that of our neighbors.

But when God's son became one of us, he did not come book in hand saying, "These are the rules for you." Jesus lived God's word.

One does not live by bread alone.

Only one hunger in Jesus' heart would matter, the hunger for His Father. The physical hunger was intense, but he would not turn from God to satisfy it.

Jesus proved it could be done. Now we feel worse. Jesus trusted in God even as he was suffering and dying, even as life itself was taken on the cross. Not hunger but faith in God rules over Jesus' life. There is no excuse for us.

Just when God has us without excuse, what does God do? God turns our bread into Jesus. Just when you come to this altar with nothing left in your hands but your guilt, God fills you with all the faith and righteousness that is Jesus. Jesus' victory over the devil is your victory over the devil.

You walk out that door as holy and innocent and pure and full of faith as Jesus.

All your sin Jesus took to the cross - all his righteousness is now yours.

“God made him to be sin who knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

“Once you were darkness, now you are light. Walk as children of the light.”