

Land of Plenty CROP 2008

Sermon
Rev. Rebecca Clancy
Genesis 41:46-49
Psalm 16

As long as there have been dreams, it would seem, they have been taken for portents.

So it was that several thousand years ago, Pharaoh's spirits became troubled by the strange images that had begun to haunt his dreams – seven cows sleek and fat coming up out of the Nile and seven cows ugly and thin coming up after and consuming them; seven ears of grain plump and good growing on a stalk and seven ears of grain thin and blighted growing on another, entwining and enveloping it. Pharaoh did not know what to make of these strange images, but of one thing he was certain: They did not bode well for Egypt.

So he gathered all the magicians and wise men from out of the land to interpret his dreams, but he found them, to a man, at a loss. He was then informed of a young Hebrew in Pharaoh's prison known to have a knack for interpreting dreams. The young Hebrew, of course, was Joseph. Pharaoh sent for him at once, and indeed, Joseph readily interpreted his dreams.

The seven cows sleek and fat and the seven ears of grain plump and good, Joseph declared to Pharaoh, represented seven coming years of plenty – plenty so abundant that grain would be, as our Old Testament lesson described it, “like the sand of the

sea...beyond measure” – so abundant in fact that its surplus would supply all of Egypt, indeed all the world, during that which the seven cows ugly and thin and the seven ears of grain thin and blighted represented – seven following years of famine.

So it was that Egypt became known as the Land of Plenty.

And so it was in comparable manner that America became known as the Land of Plenty. So abundant were America’s natural resources that an early settler wrote of them, “Even more than the many goodly groves of fruit trees and clean streams, there are fowl in abundance, fish in multitude, deer a plenty, and besides millions of crows that sit pecking the full ripe grapes.” America’s natural resources were, like Egypt’s grain, “like the sands of the seas...beyond measure.”

Unlike Egypt, however, whose years of plenty were short lived, America has continued over the centuries to be known as a Land of Plenty, more plenty in fact than that early settler could have begun to imagine. He could have known nothing of the vastness of the land and the extent of its fertility and stores. We Americans could well be possessed of the greatest Land of Plenty in all of history. And so, we can indeed declare with this morning’s psalter lesson that the boundary lines have fallen for us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.

Almost too pleasant and too goodly. America is so very rich in natural resources that the Land of Plenty has now become the Land of Excess. So much so that it makes the news

nearly every week. It was reported last week that a quarter of all America's edible food is wasted. And the week before that that weight related health care costs are sky rocketing. And the week before that that obesity is now considered an epidemic. Ours has gone from an embarrassment of riches to a disgrace of riches.

But the strangest thing about it is that with all our food, we feel strangely unfilled. There is a hunger within us that it does not satisfy.

But how can this be? The answer is not far in seeking. It was declared by both Moses and Jesus was it not that we do not live by bread alone. And why is this? It is because we are made in the *image of God*. We are not merely children of nature who can be fully satisfied by food or the fulfillment of any of our natural needs. We are also children of God. This means we can only be fully satisfied by the fulfillment of our natural needs **and** our spiritual needs.

And how is this accomplished? How do we know how to fulfill our spiritual needs? By turning to precepts of the one who is the **perfect** image of God; *the Son of God*, who proclaimed, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*"

We will be fully satisfied when we hunger and thirst for righteousness. And this begins in the right acknowledgment that the boundary lines that have fallen so nicely for us and have given us such a goodly heritage have fallen that way by sheer luck, and not by

entitlement; that those same boundary lines have fallen disastrously for others -- others who even by the sweat of their faces can not get their bread, others for whom poverty and hunger are ways of life and starvation and disease ways of death. We all know the grim statistics; that two thirds of the world's population as I speak hungers or starves.

Only when food for them and not for ourselves becomes our first and foremost priority will we be filled, but by proclamation of the Son of God we will be filled! We will be filled and fully satisfied.

And so to all those walking for CROP this afternoon – Don't worry about your appetite -- it will be filled in more ways than one. Amen.