

“Jesus comes to feed my hungry soul.” Matthew 26:26-28

A good summary of Holy Thursday in seven words, would be “Jesus comes to feed my hungry soul.” We all get that our bodies need food. Even when sleeping, they burn calories and need replenishing. We cannot live without food. What we don’t so readily understand is that we also need soul food, nourishment for that non-physical part of our being.

This is not just a Christian idea. Psychotherapist Adele McDowell, who is not a Christian wrote a 2009 article called “50 Ways to Feed Your Soul”. Here are some of her suggestions. 1. *Have a pillow fight.* 2. *Take a walk in the forest.* 4. *Smell a rose.* 5. *Smell a baby.* 19. *Make snow angels.* 20. *Swim with the dolphins.* 32. *Sing in the shower.* 44. *Finger paint.* 49. *Play with a puppy.* Do these things, she says, and you will feed your hungry soul. While there are times that smelling a baby may not feed the soul, these things can bring joy. But for nourishing the soul they seem inadequate.

McDowell has a few other ideas, however, that seem at first more helpful. 38. *Talk with the angels.* (Although she doesn’t say how to do this or what to say to them.) 7. *Surrender to love.* (Although she doesn’t tell us what love looks like, or how to surrender to it.)

A number of our church ladies serve in a ministry called “Food for the Soul”. They bring meals to those who have just arrived home with a new baby, are recovering from surgery, going through a sickness, and have indicated that they would welcome help to feed themselves. In a sense, the recipients of this ministry do talk to angels of mercy and surrender to love, which Dr. McDowell prescribes. “Food for the Soul” feeds not only the body, but also the soul with Christian love.

But there is a hunger which no human being can fully satisfy for another. It is referred to in Dr. McDowell’s 30th suggestion. *Forgive yourself—for everything.* While she recognizes that we hunger to be forgiven, we cannot feed forgiveness to ourselves. Only God can, for as David confessed, it is against Him only that we sin. (Ps. 51:4) When we forgive each other and when your pastor forgives you, it is God’s forgiveness we share.

For that hunger there is a different kind of meal that God himself arranged. He commanded Israel to eat it each year to remember how he delivered them from slavery in Egypt. For generations, they had been eating and drinking this meal with thanksgiving to God for saving their bodies from the strain and pain of slave labor. But on this night Jesus changed this meal into a meal that feeds our souls from the spiritual bondage to sin.

In his Large Catechism Martin Luther calls the Lord’s Supper “food for the soul” We eat and drink this meal with our mouths. We chew and swallow and digest the bread and wine. But in this meal God promises more than physical nourishment. Listen again to how Matthew described it: “*Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”*

“Food for the soul.” Bread and wine, body and blood—poured out for many. Poured out for you. With this meal God provides for us the very thing for which our souls are longing. He offers us his forgiveness, and where there is forgiveness, there is also life and salvation. And no more perfect food could he offer up, because it is his very own holy and innocent body and blood, sacrificed to receive the punishment we deserve.

Throughout this season of Lent, we’ve been thinking about how we could summarize the good news of Jesus in only seven words. Tonight, we’ll put it like this. **“Jesus comes to feed my hungry soul.”**

He feeds it with the greatest soul food ever: forgiveness. Amen.