

Redeemed, Restored, Encouraged
Psalm 146
December 11, 2022
First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro
By Jeff Wintermote

There once was a man
A homeless man
Who traveled from place to place
Never staying at one place for very long
One day he came upon a small town
The people who lived in the town were known for being
unfriendly to strangers
It was well known among the homeless population
to stay away from this town
because the town's people would treat them unkindly
Some even reported being spit on by the town's
people
It was a hot day and the homeless man found a shady spot near a
spring where he could rest and clean up
After resting for about a half hour
The man began to gather some fallen branches to build a fire
with
As pile of firewood grew
A boy about 10 years old came out from the house across
the road and asked
"What ya doing?"
"I am going to make a fire so I can cook some soup."
"What kind of soup?" the boy asked
"It's a special soup with a secret ingredient."
"Really?" the boy questioned
"Yes, really" and the man went to work starting his fire
The boy immediately ran home and told his mother
"There's a man across the road who is going to make a
special soup with a secret ingredient."
"Is that so." The mother barked.

The mother marched across the road to where the man was building
the fire and yelled.
"What are you doing here?"
"I am going to cook some soup."
The mother laughed and said
"How are you going to make a soup when you don't even
have a pot to cook with."
"Would you mind loaning me a pot for a few hours. I promise to
return it."
Before the mother could respond her son excitedly said
"Mom he has a secret ingredient and it is going to be a
special soup. Please loan him a pot. I will keep my eye on
him and make sure it does not steal it."
"Alright" the mother said. "You can borrow a pot."
The mother went home and a few minutes later the boy returned
with a large pot.
"Is this big enough for your soup?" the boy asked
"Yes that is perfect."
The man took the pot, filled it with water from the spring, then
returned to the fire to begin the soup.
The homeless man and the boy sat down on the ground and
began to talk
"When do we put in the secret ingredient?"
The man walked over to his backpack and pulled out a small bag
"I will put it in now but you cannot watch because it is a
secret ingredient."
The boy closed his eyes and put his hands over his
eyes.
"Did you put it in? Did you put it in?"
"Yes" the man replied. "Can't you smell it?"
The boy put his nose close to the pot and
smelled. "It smells soooooo good." The boy replied.
As they were talking another boy, an older boy, maybe 14 or 15
years old came walking by.
"What ya doing" he asked.
The younger boy excited told him all about the special soup and the
secret ingredient.

“I was just down at the garden getting some carrots for my rabbits. Would you like a carrot for your soup?”

“That would be great” the man replied. The special soup is especially good with carrots in it.”

The older boy handed him a carrot and then continued on his way home.

A few minutes later the local pastor drove by. He looked out his window but did not stop. He drove up the road to the stop sign and then turned around and came back. He got out of the car, walked over to the man and the boy and said, “Jimmy, are you ok? Does your mother know you are over here?”

Jimmy excitedly told the pastor all about the special soup with the secret ingredient and how his mother loaned them the pot and how David had given a carrot for the soup.

“You know what” the pastor said, “every day when I go out to my car to drive home from the church, I find some zucchini that has been left there by caring parishioners. I am so sick and tired of zucchini.

Would you like some for your soup?”

“My soup is especially good with zucchini in it. That would be wonderful. Thank you so much.”

As they were talking, another car stopped. An older man got out the car and asked, “Hey what’s going on here?” Jimmy told the man, Mr. Oliver, all about the special soup and the secret ingredient and how David had given a carrot and Pastor Schmidt had given a zucchini for the soup.”

Mr. Oliver simply said “OK’ and then drove away.

About 15 minutes later Mr. Oliver returned.

He said, “My wife made soup every Tuesday. She always put peas in it. I hate peas. My wife died last month and I miss her soup so much. Here. I brought you some peas from our garden. I hope it makes your soup better.”

The news about the homeless man and his special soup spread quickly through the small town. Over the next couple of hours people brought onions, potatoes, green beans, corn, celery, and Mrs. McAllister even brought a chicken she was planning to fry for

Sunday lunch. Many stayed and visited with friends and acquaintances they had not seen for a while.

At 6:00 the homeless cook announced the soup was ready and everyone was invited to stay to eat. Jimmy’s mother, Mrs. Zook, quickly shuffled home to get bowls and spoons. It was well after dark when the last person left. Only the homeless man remained on the side of the road. He laid his head on his backpack and sighed. “It has been a good day” he declared.

In her book *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church*

Rachel Held Evans describes God’s Kingdom as

“a bunch of outcasts and oddballs gathered at a table, not because they are rich or worthy or good, but because they are hungry, because they said yes. And there always room for more.”

How long does it take to make good soup?

We live in a microwaveable world

Where making soup does not take hours

But minutes

Many of us grew up in homes where our mothers

put on a pot of soup in the morning

and it cooked all day

Its aroma filling the house

Advent is about waiting. – Like waiting for the soup to cook

A patient expectation.

But Advent waiting is not passive.

It is not sitting with our hands in our laps

and doing nothing.

Advent waiting is active.

It is a time of preparation for the coming Messiah.

There is work to be done.

There is soup to be made.

Good soup doesn't cook itself.

Leave green beans, potatoes, and carrots
on the kitchen counter and what do you have?

Green beans, potatoes and carrots.

The ingredients must be put in a pot
and the heat must be turned on.

Someone must put forth some effort
before good soup is made.

And what motivates a person to make soup?

Hunger!

Jesus told us

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst.”

**The Kingdom of God is a bunch of outcasts and oddballs
gathered at a table,
not because they are rich or worthy or good,
but because they are hungry.**

How do we recognize good soup?

We taste it.

We know good soup when its taste is pleasant.

When its aroma draws us to the table.

When our hunger is satisfied.

Good soup brings us comfort.

It fulfills our needs.

The world is hungry for good soup.

Soup that satisfies its hunger.

That fulfills its needs.

The world is hungry for good news.

It hungers for a gospel that draws them
to a relationship with a living God.

The world hungers for good news –

For good gospel soup

What makes good gospel soup?

A good gospel soup is a gospel
that cares about the hungry,
the hurting,
the depressed,
the discouraged.

A good gospel soup is a gospel that says
there is a Messiah that cares about your every need.

A good gospel soup is a gospel that says

I care about you

and I am here to walk with you
through all the pain,
disappointment,
and discouragement.

A good gospel soup is a gospel that draws people to the table.
The Lord's table.

It's a gospel says Come.

Taste and see that Lord is good.

Come to the table and be filled.

**The Kingdom of God is a bunch of outcasts and oddballs
gathered at a table,
not because of what they have or what they have done
but because they are hungry for God**

Psalm 146 describes God as

the One who upholds the cause of the oppressed

the One who gives food to the hungry

the One who sets prisoners free

the One who gives sight to the blind

the One who lifts the head of the depressed

the One who watches over the foreigner

the One who provides for the orphan and the widow

The soup we have made today is meant to remind us of those whom the Lord has a special love for

Those suffering injustice
The unemployed and underemployed
Those who seek to be set free from bondage
Those whose sight and insight is limited
Those enduring mental illness
Those who have been forced from their homelands
Those who have lost loved ones.

This soup is a reminder that we are God's hands and feet and mouths in this world

We are the ones who are able to bring good gospel soup to those who are discouraged, hurt, disillusioned, and feeling unloved.

And the soup is to remind us of the times we have been encouraged through someone sharing some good gospel soup with us.

Of the times we have received a card, a gift, a hug, a meal,
A warm handshake, or even a simple pat on the shoulder
that lifted our head and
Helped us get through the day.

During our sharing time,

You have the opportunity to share how you have been encouraged or how you have encouraged someone else.
This will be a time when we can share the good news we have heard and seen with our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Oh, and by the way

If you were wondering what the secret ingredient to the special soup was.

The secret ingredient is love.

The most important ingredient of all.

It's the ingredient Jesus carried from town to town

From home to home

From fishing boat to fishing boat

**Come, all you who hunger and thirst,
Come, and receive God's food –
without money and without cost.**

Come, Taste and see that the Lord is good!