



I have always been fascinated with the word choice in that opening line to the first reading: “the rabble...had a strong craving.” It presents yet another perfect opportunity for us readers thousands of years later to rail against the Israelites, who just want a little something more in the sustenance department. But we readers filled with countless hours of Bible study wisdom and Confirmation classes and all the prayer resources at our disposal, we will take full advantage of our high-and-mighty faith hindsight perch and rail against the rabble; as if we wouldn’t want the same thing, as if we wouldn’t want a little more in the sustenance department, as if we wouldn’t want a little more holy

comfort and blessed reassurance wandering aimlessly in a seemingly life-long wilderness. It’s so incredibly easy for us to rail against the Israelite rabble, as if we wouldn’t have the exact same cravings.

Nevertheless, I am even more fascinated with what the words mean for certain children of God today: “the rabble...[have] a strong craving.” Because part of our Lutheran standard operating procedure in the classroom learning department is a brief stop along the way for First Communion. For the longest time, it was in our most esteemed wisdom that no matter how strong the craving may have been for the child, not to mention the desire for their parents and grandparents, the younger person had to wait until they finished our spiritual decathlon of Confirmation, before they could partake of the Lord’s Supper. That if they learned the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, the books of the Bible, among other things, then they would be spiritually and mentally prepared: they would have the needed understanding of what it means for “This is my body given for you,” and “This is my blood shed for you.”

Except, maybe the rabble became a bit too much for the high-and-mighty in the church to handle anymore, and so we were willing to cave into satisfying the Communion cravings of children, not to mention appeasing their parents and grandparents, in tasting and seeing the goodness of the Lord for them at a much younger age than the historical church ever dared considered. I remember one such younger boy, who for the longest time, had this strong craving for the bread and grape juice. Sunday after Sunday he would reach for them, as if it was no big deal, as if it should just be part of our standard operating procedure to freely unleash such gifts of God to all who desire to partake. But, time and time again, his family would have to deny his strong craving, and instead, he would just retrieve a piece of bread and a cup of grape juice to whichever family member was standing behind him in line, as if he was nothing more than rabble in the grand scheme of the church operation, because the rest of the high-and-mighty faith hindsight us evidently knew more about the high-and-mighty Eucharist than him. With all the countless hours of Bible study and Confirmation and prayer resources at our disposal, we were somehow more worthy of the body and blood of Christ than that child, whose craving could rival that of any Communion recipient on the face of this entire earth.

Eventually, we did the First Communion class thing. I’m sure I didn’t teach him enough Luther or Bible or prayer or whatever else. I’m sure I didn’t share with him nearly enough so that he could get it, that he could understand just how God could satisfy a craving not just of mind and body but of the depths of his soul. Except, oddly enough, I think he had that part more than covered.

It turned out this boy was not exactly the first one welcomed to the lunch table at school. He was odd. He was weird to the cool kids’ standard. He was quirky. He, evidently, wasn’t good enough to what was considered the social operation standard for young boys at the time. A random table turned out to be an object of guilt and shame and intimidation and feeling not good enough for a variety of reasons,

reducing him to believing that he was nothing short of rabble in the grand scheme of humanity, making him feel as if he was wandering through a never-ending wilderness of life.

But when he came up to receive his first tangible dose of the Gospel, he had this biggest smile on his face, bright enough to fill every church building sanctuary throughout this entire earth. I don't know if I shared with him nearly enough, but I think God took care of that. And I think that boy had it covered, too, for he had found a table that he would always have a seat at, no matter what. And, better yet, but he could be as odd as he wanted, as quirky, as weird as his most precious heart desired, because at God's table, he would be deemed absolutely wonderful. He didn't have to get how a piece of bread and a few drops of grape juice can somehow be the body and blood of Christ. He didn't have to get it. I didn't get it then. I still don't.

But this meal isn't about us getting it or getting God after countless hours of Bible study and Confirmation and all the prayer resources at our disposal. This is about God getting us in all our quirks and weirdness and oddities galore, and still insisting that we are welcomed with all the baggage we don't even realize is there. That there will always be more than enough room for us just as we are, satisfying a craving that goes so incredibly deep that we don't even realize just how much we need it, not just for a heavenly banquet, but right here, right now, so that we may also be set free to help satisfy the cravings of love and grace and the true meaning of the Gospel meant to be experienced at all tables in every school and home and church building and everywhere else. The rabble still have a strong craving, and this God of new life has more than enough in the holiest disposal to satisfy it all. It happens yet again, from a not-so-normal table, but it most certainly does not stop here, because Christ is still Risen indeed, in this sanctuary and throughout the world. And for that Greatest News of all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!