

## PRAYER:

### “LIVING OFF YOUR HUMP!”

As a fan of Super Bowl commercials, the stoppage of Hollywood filming has brought back many unique and enjoyable throwback commercials.

One of my favorites is a Geico commercial. It makes me laugh every time I see it. I know that some of you have seen it, too. A camel is walking through an office and asking, “What day is it? Come on, I know you know.” “MikeMikeMikeMikeMike What day is it? It’s HUMP day!

Yes, Hump Day or Wednesday. Wednesday, the middle of our week. Everything leads up to it and once you’re over the mid-way point, **the hump**, you’re headed toward the weekend. Of course, in the commercial, the line is that “Geico’s lower prices will make you happy. How happy? Happier than a camel on hump day.”

But Hump Day isn’t just on Wednesdays, it’s **ANY** day when you are through with the past and looking ahead to the **FUTURE**.

Probably for the first time in modern history, both parents and students have had their COVID-19 Hump Day and are anxiously and prayerfully focusing on going back to school. Humanity looks ahead in order to gear up for what lies ahead. And as **CHRISTIANS**, we always have the **HOPE** of things to come, the **BELIEF** that things can and **WILL** get better. Christians are hopeful, but first we have to get over the **HUMP** of what’s holding us back. On Mondays and Tuesdays, we are still talking about **LAST** weekend. On **HUMP** Day, we begin talking about **NEXT** weekend.

Camels were the “18-wheelers” in Biblical times. They were called the “Ships of The Desert” and were used for both transportation Genesis 24:61 (Afterwards, Rebekah and the young women who were to travel with her prepared to leave. Then they got on camels and left with Abraham’s servant and his men) and carrying freight for long distances. Genesis 37:25 (As Joseph’s brothers sat down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with all kinds of spices that they were taking to Egypt.)

They could carry up to a half ton of goods and travel up to 30 miles a day. They drank 25 gallons of water at one time and could go on long journeys without food by living off the fat stored in their hump. On a long journey, the hump would shrink in size and the nutrients absorbed would then need to be replenished. The health of a camel always depended on how much nourishment was stored in the hump.

And when it comes to our spiritual journey, you and I may need to ask our self: “Are we living off our hump?” Like the camel, we can live off our hump for only so long before it needs to be replenished. And perhaps, for some of us, we’ve been living off the spiritual nourishment we stored in our hump a long time ago.

When you read the Bible, have you read some obscure and maybe not so obscure parts found in the Old Testament? Let’s see what you remember. We remember Jacob (or was it Joseph) and something about an Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat or was that just a musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber? We remember the misfortunes suffered by Job but he can’t remember what he did to deserve them. We remember Joseph, no, wait, it was Jacob who wrestled with an angel after Jacob refused to sacrifice his son or was that Abraham? And who was that guy Melchizedek? Gosh! We used to be able to remember all these biblical characters! Are we living off our hump?

Christians replenish their spiritual nourishment by the daily reading of scripture. One of my professors in seminary was asked why people need to read the Bible continuously and why they need to go to church and hear the Gospel message again and again. He smiled and replied, “Because us Christians leak.” Another put it a little more cynically. He said “Preaching is like taking a bucket of water and pouring it into the thimbles of those who hear. Only for them

to spill it out as they walk out the door of the church.” A terrifying thought as a pastor who spends many hours laboring over a sermon? But is it true! If you’re are an “average” churchgoer, you will have forgotten the sermon within four hours after hearing it. That’s why if we are not constantly refreshing and replenishing our souls through the daily reading of scripture, our spiritual gauge will be pinning on empty.

It would be inconceivable to eat one meal on Sunday afternoon and starve ourselves with an absolute fast until next Sunday’s dinner. We would not permit our stomachs to go without life-nourishing food for six days in a row year after year! Yet, if we are “Sunday Christians” only, isn’t that what we are doing with our souls?

One in five churchgoers never have read the Bible. The majority of churchgoers (57%) read their Bible less than four times a year. So when a non-believer asks us about Noah, we struggle to remember what was on that flannel board when we first heard that story in Sunday School... They ask us about why we hold onto certain Christian beliefs and we don’t know how to answer them. We quote something spiritual we liked that the pastor said last Sunday or no, wait, maybe we heard that on Game of Thrones? Or one of those meaningful quotes from Criminal Minds. The most commonly quoted “scripture” by Christians is “God helps those who help themselves.” A well-known saying but it denies God’s grace and it’s not scriptural. It’s not in your Bible. We too easily fall into error and can even lead others astray when we’re living off our hump.

God knows we need daily spiritual food for our soul as well as food for our bodies. Whether it’s our stomach or our souls, we cannot thrive if we are being fed only 52 times a year. We eat food because we enjoy it and it sustains life. We need to feed our souls for the same reason every day! The Holy Spirit says, ‘Today when you hear my voice, don’t harden your hearts’” Hebrews 3:7-8 Hearing the voice of God today through His Word keeps our hearts soft and open to Him. And like the manna given by God in the desert, there is only enough nourishment for one day. But the next day, God will give us enough for that day too. And the daily manna points to what is truly nourishing for us. “So, He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that humanity shall not live by bread alone; but humanity lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Deuteronomy 8:3

The scriptures invite us to pay attention to our spiritual diets because those affect us even more. If we consume a steady stream of attack ads, hateful speech, and all forms of violence, it’s so easy for us to become angry, bitter and materialistic. In the spiritual sense, it’s even more true – we are what we eat. We need to be mindful of all the content we’re consuming. When our daily rituals take so much out of us, we aren’t really replenished with just an occasional taste of some- thing good. One healthy meal can’t make up for all the days of junk food and empty calories. We need a steady diet of life-giving nourishment.

That is what Jesus gives us. Jesus Christ, and our life in Christ, provide what we need for a nourished life that can nurture others. As disciples, we live by the Word of God! Reading His Word daily maintains a healthy level of spiritual nourishment in our soul. When renewed daily, His Word gives up-to-the-moment life-changing instruction and encouragement for the things that we’re dealing with right now. In the life of our church, West Bend faith communities, we are in sort of a Hump season. We are definitely looking forward. If you’ve been feeling lost or spiritually empty, you may be **living off your hump** and your soul needs to be **replenished**. If so, could this be a good time to return to a daily practice of reading God’s Word?

This Sunday, go home with good nourishment that will keep you nourished - God’s Word, and the invitation to gnaw on it and let it get into us. The Holy Spirit so that you will always be fed by God’s presence with us. The assurance of the power of prayer that we can commune with God anywhere and we’re a part of the holy family. We are not alone; we have siblings in Christ. We’re also charged to live out the values of this family – to live in ways that nourish and feed others and our world, as Jesus calls us to do. Our HUMP can feed us each day and provide a healthy spiritual diet - prayer and scripture reading. “Come on, I know you know - What day is it?” **It’s HUMP day!**