

Sermon for Pentecost 11

August 5, 2018

“The Bread of Life”

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours from thanks to Jesus, the Bread of Life. Amen.

Dear Christians,

We have been blessed with much more than just the basic necessities of life, and so it's fun to play those games that ask, “If you were stranded on a deserted island, and you had food, water, clothes, and shelter, and you got to have 5 or 3 or 1 other things with you, what would it be?” It's fun to think about the things you would miss the most or the things that you are addicted to the most that would be hardest to let go of or most necessary.

It's a fun game to play sometimes, and it can help us to remember that we have so, so many earthly blessings from God that it's hard to even remember them all.

But surrounded by so many earthly blessings, Jesus reminds us what we would most need to have with us – that should be included in the list even before the food, water, clothes and shelter.

Jesus reminds us that we need him most of all as we listen in on a discussion he had once:

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

The previous day, Jesus had done the miracle, the feeding of the five thousand. With 5 loaves of barley bread and two small fish, Jesus fed a crowd that had 5,000 men, plus all the women, plus all the children. It was an amazing miracle, and the crowd took it the wrong way. They had wanted to declare Jesus king because he gave them bread. So, Jesus left. The next day, the crowd tried to find Jesus, and they found him and asked a question:

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” Jesus answered them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

You can see how the crowd was thinking earthly thoughts. They were interested in Jesus' transportation method – how he had gotten over there so quickly. Jesus gives them an answer – but he doesn't tell them what they want to hear, he tells them what they need to hear. They were interested in the right person but for all the wrong reasons. They wanted Jesus to do his magic and make more bread today, and tomorrow, and the next day, and Jesus tells them, you're looking for the wrong kind of bread. You're spending your energy chasing after the wrong kind of bread.

What did they need, more than food? They needed spiritual food that results in eternal life, that they could get from Jesus, the Son of Man who has God the Father's approval.

Well, the crowd was willing to listen to Jesus' redirect, at least for now.

So they said to him, “What should we do to carry out the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent.”

They just couldn't get this earthly line of thinking out of their heads. They were being too literal with the analogy – they figured, just like we work for our food, what work do we have to do to get our spiritual food from God the Father?

But what work does God require? None! You don't do anything, you simply believe in the one God sent. The one God sent did the doing part of it already.

But now the crowd started playing hard ball with Jesus' message. Who is the one that God sent? They knew Jesus was saying it was him, but now they want proof:

Then they asked him, "So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus said to them, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Can you believe their nerve to ask Jesus for proof? They had just eaten a miraculous meal the previous day, and now, the very next day, what do they say? Miracle, schmiracle, Jesus, do a real miracle. And they suggested one. How about something on par with the manna from heaven that came down and fed the whole nation for 40 years as they wandered in the desert. One meal just isn't going to cut it.

But Jesus takes them to task. That bread from heaven wasn't from Moses or from any person. It was from God himself, and God has more important bread than the manna in the wilderness. Jesus says that God has bread, food, sustenance for life that he sent down from heaven to feed not one nation, but the whole world.

That got the crowd's interest again.

"Sir," they said to him, "give us this bread all the time!" "I am the Bread of Life," Jesus told them. "The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty."

If Jesus had a bread truck better than manna from heaven, the crowd wanted access. Alright Jesus, now we're talking, let's get that bread.

Jesus drives the point home, again. "I am the Bread of Life." It's me, Jesus says, I'm what you need, I'm the source of life.

That's where our text ends for today. If we read along further, most of the people talking with Jesus didn't get it. In fact, many of the people who had been following Jesus stopped after this. They said Jesus was too hard with his teachings, and they left. They never got it.

But you have. So what's the point of this for you today? What's the application? What do we want to take home today?

In the first place, let's remember that Jesus' urging is true for us too. We need the Bread of Life, or we die. Our spiritual condition means that we need to have bread, food, sustenance for our souls. Your soul requires food as much as your body does.

And Jesus is that food. He's the Bread of Life. Jesus is the food, the sustenance and there's no gluten-free, low sodium substitute for Jesus. Jesus is the only sustenance for spiritual and eternal life. He's the only one that God the Father sent from heaven to give life to the world.

Jesus is the only one that can resuscitate a spiritually dead sinner, give them life, and sustain that life. It's such a great picture that Jesus gives as he declares, "I am the Bread of Life," and he explains how totally effective he is at sustaining life, "The one who comes to me will never be

hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.” You do believe in Jesus, and Jesus is all you’ll ever need.

That’s the simple truth Jesus proclaims. Without him, you’re dead. But you are not without him, you have him through faith, and you’re alive.

Be thankful for what you have. You just went through an account of a whole crowd of people who witnessed one of Jesus’ most flashy miracles and who were right there talking about it with Jesus and they didn’t get it. There before them was the Bread of Life and the way to God the Father and most of them said, “I don’t want it.” That’s a horrible tragedy, for those people to be face to face with their Savior and to walk away with nothing more than a free meal that was already gone. Be thankful that by God’s grace, you are here and you have Jesus, the Bread of Life. You have spiritual life. You have eternal life. Thanks be to God!

And you know that there are still crowds of people who don’t get it. People who are interested in church because they want a fast road to earthly blessings. People who think that their life is full and busy and good without the Bread of Life. People who think that they have the Bread of Life, but not Jesus.

And some of those people are your friends. Some are your neighbors. Some are your own flesh and blood. People who think they’re all set up for spiritual life, but their soul is starving or dead as they spend their days pursuing anything but the Bread of Life, Jesus, who comes in Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, Holy Scriptures, and in no other way.

You have the Bread of Life. You know where to get it. Share it with someone who’s starving for Jesus. Amen.

Text: *John 6:24-35*

Jesus is the bread that gives life.

²⁴When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

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