

John 6:22-35

“A Different Kind of Bread”

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 13B)

August 4, 2024

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Jesus said to them: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves”** (John 6:26).

Jesus’ popularity greatly increased following the miraculous feeding of the 5,000. From just five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus fed 5,000 men, plus the women and children. Everyone’s hunger was satisfied, even with 12 baskets left over.

However, there is something to be said about the phrase: *“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.”* Jesus, indeed, gave these 5,000 men their fill of the loaves, but now there is a problem: they want more! The crowd didn’t understand the sign. But they were not alone. As we heard last week in Mark 6: even Christ’s disciples **“did not understand about the loaves”** (Mark 6:52).

Everyone appears to be confused. The crowds want to crown Jesus as their “Bread King.” Jesus’ disciples have witnessed and been a part of signs and miracles, and they still don’t get it.

Today, on this 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, the crowds are seeking Jesus, but Jesus doesn’t seem all that impressed at His popularity, since He knows their real motive in following Him – to be their “Bread King,” so Jesus speaks sharply as He informs them and us that He has come to give man a different kind of food, a food that endures to eternal life.

Humanity likes stuff. Our fallen nature believes that by having material goods – perishable goods, we would be satisfied. But are we ever satisfied with perishable goods? Would a new smart phone satisfy your wants? Would an 80-inch television satisfy your desires? Would that perfect steak fill your stomach forever?

Each year the latest smart phone is released. Is it that much different from the previous phone? No! But so many people believe they need that latest phone. Although your current tv set is fine, that latest 4K Ultra high-definition television with surround sound is so appetizing. And we all certainly need to eat, but even that juiciest steak will only satisfy our stomachs for a matter of hours.

You see, these things that don't last can only satisfy a need and many a want for only a brief time as they always wear off, wear out, go out of style, get lost, get stale, break, or fail to maintain our satisfaction. Sometimes, we are like the rich fool who only focused on his possessions as he built large barns to store all his grain and goods. But God said to this rich fool, ***“Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”*** (Luke 12:20).

So we can't take any perishable goods with us when we die. Have you ever seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul? No! St. Paul writes, ***“We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world”*** (1 Timothy 6:7). And Job said, ***“Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return”*** (Job 1:21a).

As much as we desire to be filled by worldly possessions and perishable foods to fill our bellies, we must never forget that the triune God has already satisfied us with all of our bodily wants as He has stocked man's pantry and cellar with abundance to His joy and His delight, since He is the Provider. He is the Giver.

As the Provider and Giver, the triune God gives us all things, He gave us all things to produce food and drink, but we must work and cultivate to have that food to nourish us.

But even as the Giver of all temporal gifts, those gifts are only temporary. They only last for a time. They will perish.

So, Jesus says, ***“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life”*** (John 6:27). This is as if Jesus said: *“I will supply you with a different kind of food. Why do you want morsels and trifles from Me? Why don't you want a different sort of food? A food that never perishes. A bread that endures to eternity. A bread that will not let you die, but preserve you for everlasting life.”*

So, this crowd asks Jesus, ***“Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?”*** (John 6:30)

They had all just witnessed the miraculous feeding of the 5,000. Their stomachs were filled. And even that miracle did not satisfy them. *“But what have you done for me lately, Jesus? You know, our fathers ate manna in the wilderness!”*

That multiplication of the loaves appears to be a sign of the same type as the manna in the wilderness. However, there is a difference. Moses gave the manna for 40 years. Jesus gave bread to 5,000. Moses supplied manna to an entire nation. Jesus gave them ordinary bread, bread such as they ate every day. Moses gave them ***“bread from heaven to eat”*** (John 6:31).

Jesus had, indeed, done something wonderful in multiplying bread, but could this Jesus, also produce manna?

To that question, Jesus says, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven”*** (John 6:32).

That manna was not Moses’ gift to the people; it was God’s gift to the people. That manna came from God. But that manna, though a gift from God, was not from heaven, but was an earthly, material type of bread. That manna, if left over till the morning would breed worms and stink (Exodus 16:20). Manna eventually perished.

This ***“true bread from heaven”*** given by God the Father is not a bread that someone can just pick up and eat. No. It is a different kind of bread. This bread is none other than Jesus Himself. He Himself is the food, the sustenance that nourishes spiritual life. It is only from this Bread that humanity really obtains life.

Jesus is the Gift. He is the true bread come from heaven for us to eat. He is the One that we ought to be grasping, clinging to, grabbing, collecting, and claiming as much as we possibly can of.

We must have Him. We must believe in Him. We must trust in Him. We must cling to Him. We must have as much of Jesus as we can. We must say, *“Give us yourself always, Jesus!”*

So, let us look to the things that last forever, knowing that Jesus provides all the things of this world that we really need. He supplies our earthly needs. Jesus said, ***“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”*** (Matthew 6:25-26).

Since Jesus gives us all our earthly needs, then we should be of the things that never perish. We ought to labor for the food that endures forever. This means nothing more than clinging to Jesus, hearing His Word, reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting Him, so that we may embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life. We cling to Jesus, since He is the Bread from heaven that has secured eternal life for you. He secured eternal life by laying down His life on the cross for you. Through His crucifixion and death, He has graciously given us all things (Romans 8:32): forgiveness, life, and salvation!

Today, Jesus, this different kind of bread, comes to you. He comes to you so that you may have Him in abundance in His Means of Grace – His Word and Sacrament. He calls on you to eat Him and drink Him under the bread and the wine. He calls you to not work for the food that perishes, but to work for the food that endures to eternal life.

So, let us hold fast to Christ, this different kind of bread, who is the One thing needful now and forever, the One thing that lasts. Faith in Jesus is how you are sustained, so trust in Him and cling to Him as He comes to you in His Word and His Sacraments and you will be filled. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**