

Pentecost 11 8/5/18
John 6:22-35 13B

"DO NOT LABOR FOR THE FOOD THAT PERISHES, BUT FOR THE FOOD THAT ENDURES TO ENTERAL LIFE, WHICH THE SON OF MAN WILL GIVE YOU".

How much money is enough? Can you have enough money to buy satisfaction? I call your attention to one LeBron James. He has been in the news this past week for opening a school in his hometown of Akron, Ohio, for at-risk students. Much to his credit, I would add. But, I think it's also fair to say he can afford it. For those of you not aware of LeBron James, he is a basketball player who just signed a four-year contract with the Los Angeles Lakers for ... \$ 154 million dollars. In addition, his endorsement deals are worth an additional \$ 52 million dollars, which means his income for 2018, this one single year, is \$ 85.5 million dollars.

Could you live on that, for one year? Maybe you would have to cut back a little, huh? Considering that \$ 85.5 million for just one year, what would you buy? Using the words of Jesus from our lesson, can food that perishes buy contentment and peace and joy?

In our Gospel lesson for this morning, the crowd that followed Jesus were the same people Christ fed with the bread and the loaves. And then, they wanted to take Him by force and make Him their king. They wanted a king who would give them bread at their command. They misunderstood the gift from Christ. In our lesson for this morning, Jesus is teaching them that He is the Bread of Life, not simple bread which will fill the stomach, but spiritual bread which feeds their eternal souls.

These people cared only about filling their own bellies. In verse 26, Jesus says 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." The

miracle of the feeding was a sign for them which told them that the Son of God -- the Messiah -- was among them. But, they saw the Messiah only as a golden goose. They cared only where their next meal was coming from. This is why Jesus said to them, "Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you" (v. 27).

The people in the crowd were spiritually blind and dead in their sin. God Himself was among them in Jesus Christ. He did what only God could do -- He performed a miracle. What was their reaction to Jesus? They rejected Him. "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe in you? What work do you perform" (v. 30)? Even when they saw a miracle which only God could do, they did not understand. When Christ began to speak of eternity and heaven, they cared only about food for their stomachs.

They did not want bread which would make them live forever; they wanted bread to eat for their stomachs. So, they bring up the example from our Old Testament lesson, of Moses and the manna from heaven. "Our fathers are the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" (v. 31). What they were really saying to Jesus was that Moses and the manna were superior and better than Jesus and this bread He had for them. The manna Moses gave to them filled their bellies and that is all they cared about.

This is the curse of the sinful flesh. In Eden, God told Adam what it would mean for us to live in a world of sin: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life...By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Gen 3:17, 19a). The flesh has only one desire -- satisfaction of its yearnings. In our lesson this morning, it was

bread for their stomachs.

So, would \$ 85.5 million dollars be enough? At least for the year 2018? Think about that for a minute: You wouldn't have to work anymore. You would never go hungry. You could, most likely, buy any toy your little heart desired. Sounds good, right? But, but, remember well those last words of God to Adam, "... till you return to the ground for out of it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19). The REAL question for us this this: Would all the money in the world make you live forever? Would all the bread in the world save you from sin, the grave, and hell?

Do you remember the parable of the rich man whose ground yielded him a great crop? "He thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?...I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, be merry.'" Our Lord concludes this parable with these words: "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you.'" All of his wealth -- his bread -- could not save him from death. (Luke 12:16-21)

We have a far greater need than earthly bread to satisfy our hunger. We are the spiritual enemies of God, under His wrath and condemnation. We need forgiveness for the sin which has separated us from God. We need to be rescued from eternal death and the punishment of hell.

God is the giver of all gifts. He gives us the gift of life and preserves our life by giving us our daily bread. But, God does not only want you to live today, He wants you to live for all eternity. He does not only want you to have daily bread for today, He wants you to feast at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb for all eternity.

God, your Father in heaven, hungered and thirsted for your salvation, so He took it upon Himself to deliver us from the grave. He sent the true Bread from heaven, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior, "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

The Son of God gives life to the world by carrying your sin to the cross and by dying its wages upon that wooden rod of torture. Christ is the Bread who gives life to the world, because He "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light," when He rose from the grave that Easter morning (2 Tm 1:10).

"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger." We may eat earthly bread and be satisfied for a day, perhaps even a week. But then, we will hunger and need more bread. But, no matter how much of the bread of this world we have, it will not cure our souls from the sin which causes death. It is only when we eat the Bread of Life -- Jesus Christ -- that our souls will be satisfied and we will hunger no more.

How do we eat of this Bread? By faith. To eat the Bread of Life means to believe, to have faith in Jesus Christ. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther once said it so beautifully with these words: "Faith is a divine work which God demands of us; but at the same time He Himself must implant it in us, for we cannot believe by ourselves."

One again, we are reminded that God is the giver of all gifts, for even the very faith God requires of us is His gift to us. "This is the work of God," Jesus said, "that you believe in Him whom He has sent." God tells us to believe and then He gives us the faith by which we believe.

The beauty of the Christian faith is that God does everything for us. He leaves nothing for us to do. God does not give us the raw ingredients of bread and then say, "Mix it together and make bread and eat." Nor does

He put before us the baked bread and say, "Here is the bread, now it is up to you to eat."

No, God gives us everything we need. He gives us the true Bread from heaven -- Jesus Christ, who took away our sin and who conquered death and the grave for us. In the washing of Holy Baptism, God unites us to Christ, so that our Lord's victory over sin, death, and hell is our very own victory. With the faith God gives us in our baptism, we believe, trust, and find comfort in Christ alone for our salvation.

Jesus is the only one that can fill your deepest, greatest need because only Jesus can fill you with the good things of God. He feeds you with His Body and Blood to keep you strong in the faith He began at your Baptism, so that you may never hunger. And day by day, Christ raises you to new life so that you may live as the "Little Christ" He made you in your baptism.

In Christ, you look at life with the eyes of Christ. Because you live in Christ, you can see God's wonderful gifts and blessings in this world and in your life. And, the beauty and the wonder you behold, the world can never know, because in all things, we see the hand of God that satisfies the desire of every living thing.