

10 S. after Pentecost 8/1/21
John 6:22-35 13B

JESUS ANSWERED THEM, "THIS IS THE WORK OF GOD, THAT YOU BELIEVE IN HIM WHOM HE SENT."

So, we made our yearly trek to the state fair. One of the main reasons you go to the fair is to eat fair food. Granted you can get your corn on the cob, but most fair food is sought after and eaten for taste far more than nutritional value. Cheese curds, root beer float, corn dogs and jumbo corn dogs, pie and ice cream, and we dare not overlook the crown of it all – mini doughnuts. I bought a bag of mini-doughnuts and the young man who waited on me was so kind and thoughtful that he literally took a spoonful of sugar – pure sugar – and dumped it all over those mini-doughnuts before handing me this treasure. It was such a wonderment that I almost couldn't even bring myself to eat them, but just hold them and marvel at their beauty. But I couldn't let them go to waste, so I ate them. And, I was a happy man.

You never leave the fair hungry! And, there's even a bigger appeal – there's no trips to the grocery store, no cooking, no cleaning; all your troubles are gone. You just eat and wallow in that glorious moment of total satisfaction.

As strange as it may sound, it seems some of the people following Jesus through Galilee saw Him the way we see fair food. You will recall from a couple of Sundays ago, these are the people Jesus fed with a few loaves of bread and a couple small fish. 5,000 men, in addition to women and children, ate to the full, with twelve baskets of leftovers to spare. It is good for us to remember that many of these people likely lived a hand-to-mouth existence, so this miraculous feeding meant stability and a limitless

supply of food for their daily hunger. In fact, the Evangelist tells us that they were so caught up in the moment, they were going to take Jesus by force – by force – to make Him their king (Jn 6:15).

These people didn't get their diet wrong. They got God wrong. What I mean by that is this: Jesus didn't humble Himself to be born of a Virgin to bring us bread. He came to be the Bread – the Bread of Life. In our reading this morning, Jesus tries to turn their focus – and our focus – away from physical bread that satisfies hunger for a time, to the true, life-giving bread that brings eternal life. He wants us to come to Him, to believe in Him, to have faith in Him.

These people are following Jesus for the sake of their bellies,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (vv. 26-27).

How much of our time is spent working for bread that perishes? It is a very undeniable truth of earthly life that we need “food, drink, clothing, house, home, good government, good weather,” for our bodies and life (*Small Catechism*, 189-190). And yet, we struggle with what is our daily bread, because, yes, we have needs for our body and life, but we – each and every one of us – have wants. And we get our needs and our wants all mixed up. So that like the Israelites in our Old Testament lesson, even when God gives us our daily bread, we grumble because we didn't get what we want, because when it comes to our wants, we are never satisfied.

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'" (Lk 12:16-21). The man's sin was not that he had a great crop or that he wanted to build a bigger barn. It was a 1st Commandment issue – he feared, loved, and trusted in the gift rather than the giver; he loved the creation more than the Creator. Maybe I could just say it this way – he thought his money and stuff could not only buy happiness; it could buy eternity.

Remember I said these people demanding a sign from Jesus didn't get their diet wrong, they got God wrong! It wasn't Moses who gave them the manna, it was God. Remember what their fathers did in the wilderness in response to God? I quote to you the words of Moses from Exodus 16, "Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat ... Let no one leave any of it over till the morning". In the wilderness, did they fear, love, and trust in God above all things? The answer is: No! For in their fear and lack of trust, they hoarded the manna, thinking we can't trust God, so we better look out for ourselves. So, "some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank" (cf. 16:16-20).

Do you always fear, love, and trust in God above all things, even when it comes to your daily bread? We work and worry about earthly, temporal things that will not last. The Prophet Isaiah, "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy" (55:2)?

This is why God-in-the-flesh says to you, "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (vv. 32-33).

The bread that God gives is Jesus, His only-begotten Son. You know this beautiful news from John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son". God's only-begotten Son took on human flesh in order to be sin for us. He took on all of our sin and carried them to the cross, where He died as the wages of your sin.

And He rose to life again the 3rd day as proof that God accepted His sacrifice for the sins of the world, so that He can give life to the world. The sin that demanded death and hell is gone. All of it. We are forgiven. St. Paul says it this way, Jesus "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light," when He rose from the grave that Easter morning (2 Tm 1:10).

Which brings us to the words of Jesus in our lesson, "Do not work for food that perishes, but for the good that endures to eternal life" (v. 27). We hear that word "work," and we instantly think we have to "do" something to be saved. But listen to the words of Jesus, "which the Son of Man will give you...This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (27, 29).

How do we "eat" this Bread of Life? By faith. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther said it so beautifully, "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."

God is the giver of all gifts. God gives you the true bread from heaven and He gives you the very faith so that you can come to Jesus and believe in Him. In the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit of Holy Baptism, God the Holy Spirit works faith in us so that can overcome sin and trust, rejoice, and find comfort in Jesus. We eat that life-giving bread so that we will never hunger.

And, there is that undeniable truth of earthly life that our bodies do hunger and we need daily bread. The Good News for us is that,

“The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand; You satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Ps 145:15-16).

Your career, your recreation time, the medicine that you take for your body, your air conditioning, the shoes on your feet are all blessings from God because our Father in heaven wants to ease the burden of living in a sinful world and wants you to enjoy the gift of life He has given you. “All that I have is a Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee” {*LSB* 781:1}.

We receive our daily bread with thankful hearts. And we trust, rejoice, and find comfort in Jesus for He says, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger” (v. 35).