

11th S. after Pentecost 8/8/21
John 6:35–51 14B

“I AM THE LIVING BREAD THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN. IF ANYONE EATS THIS BREAD, HE WILL LIVE FOREVER.”

Back in the year 1976, Bruce Jenner was the world’s greatest athlete. He earned that title by winning the decathlon at the Olympic games, and overnight became the biggest celebrity in America – his face was on Wheaties, he had his own shoe company, he even became an actor on the TV show, CHIPS.

Oh, how times change. Now, the man formerly known as the world’s greatest athlete has stated that he always felt more comfortable as a woman. So, he engaged in some serious hormone therapy and some radical plastic surgery. Now he looks like a woman, dresses like a woman, and calls himself Caitlyn Jenner. And, he is referred to as “she/her,” instead of “he/him”. And our culture, this perverted culture in which we find ourselves living, celebrates Caitlyn Jenner and gives – do I say him or “her” – awards for bravery.

I hold this before you this morning because Caitlyn Jenner is a shining example of what happens when **feelings** are more important than **truth**. The relationship between truth and feelings is all mixed up in our world today. How I “feel” trumps everything. Who cares if it’s true or not, as long as it makes me feel good about myself.

Yet, given that, we still do things on the basis of truth. To illustrate how absurd this world in its perversity really is, let me ask you a simple question: How many of you have money in the bank? The time comes you decide to buy new golf clubs, so you go to the bank to take out some of your money and the bank says, “You don’t have any money left. We spent

it. We felt we could spend your money better than you could.” Or, you go out to eat in a restaurant. And it’s a nice restaurant so you order ... beef, its what’s for dinner. Steak, medium rare. And your server comes out of the kitchen and sets before you a plate of tofu and broccoli, because the restaurant feels that you should be eating tofu and broccoli. Or you go to your doctor. And you find you are in perfect health, but the doctor schedules surgery for you, because he/she feels you should have surgery.

Buying any of this? Yet, our culture celebrates people who follow their feelings instead of following the truth. We shouldn’t be surprised by this because it’s not really anything new.

Look at the crowd in our lesson this morning. Truth-in-the-flesh stands before them. These are the 5,000 men and their families that Jesus fed with the boy’s lunch box. And, they were Jews, which means they are intimately familiar with the Old Testament. The Old Testament that said when the Messiah comes, “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy” (Is 35:5–6). That’s what Jesus did – the blind received their sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor had good news preached to them. These people saw the signs. They should have listened and believed that when Jesus described Himself as the One Who came down from heaven, He was the One God sent in human flesh. When Jesus described Himself as the Bread that comes down from heaven that gives life to the world, they should have said, “This is the Messiah.”

But, they felt differently. They thought Jesus should give them bread from heaven like Moses did – bread for their stomachs for today. And

when Jesus didn't give them what they felt they deserved, the truth made them angry, and they "grumbled about Him" (v. 41).

My Friends in Christ, how this serves as a call for us to examine ourselves. Like the people of Capernaum, we prefer a Savior who meets our feelings, as well. Take a look at yourself. Do you grumble when God doesn't give me what you want; what you feel you just have to have? Do you reject the truth that God gives in His Word? Oh, yes, yes, you love John 3:16, but what about those parts of the Bible that say you are not to gossip about your neighbor, but talk to your neighbor, just the two of you if he/she offends you? Or how about contentment and not having a jealous heart? Or what about where it says do not let the sun go down on your anger? Do you just skip over those parts of the Bible that you don't like?

Even when we do that, Jesus has Good News for us:

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (Jn 6:51).

That's what Jesus did on the cross. He became flesh when He was incarnate and born of human mother. As the lamb of God, He took on all the sin of the world and carried it to the cross. On that cross, Jesus died for all those times you felt you knew more than God and didn't walk by faith; all the times you rejected the truth of God's Word because you felt differently; all of your sin, so that you are forgiven. Yes, He gave His flesh into death on the cross for the life of the world. And He rose the 3rd day to bring that life and immortality to light.

And because He did, He can say this, "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" (v. 51). "Anyone." The worst sinner in the entire history of the world can receive the forgiveness that Jesus earned with His death.

At the end of World War II, a Lutheran Church -Missouri Synod pastor had, what I think can legitimately be argued, the most challenging catechism class in the history of our beloved Synod. Pastor Henry Gerecke, or maybe I should more appropriately say, Chaplain Gerecke, was an Army chaplain who grew up speaking German. Because he was fluent in German and before the war had been a prison chaplain, he was assigned to provide pastoral care for the Nazi prisoners on trial in Nuremberg, Germany.

You could more than likely imagine most of the prisoner's reaction to the Gospel message. They rejected the Gospel of Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins, even as they waited for the hangman's noose. But, there were a few like Joachim Von Ribbentrop. After he walked the 13-steps to the hangman's platform, he said, "I place all my confidence in the Lamb who made atonement for my sins. May God have mercy on my soul." Then, he turned to Chaplain Gerecke and said, "I'll see you again." The black hood was pulled over his face. The noose was put around his neck – and he dropped through the trap door.

Jesus said, "... **anyone** ..." The Apostle Paul described himself this way, "I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Co 15:9). He also said this, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost" (1 Ti 1:15)

The truth is that the salvation of these horrible sinners points to the simple fact that Jesus died for the sins **of the world**. When Jesus said, "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever," He meant that it makes no

difference who you are or what you have done. There is forgiveness for you in His perfect life, His suffering, and His death.

By the Holy Spirit working faith in us through the Word and Sacraments, we eat of Jesus Christ, the bread of life from heaven. By that gift of faith, we can believe that Jesus is eternal food and drink who will keep us alive with Him in eternity. We have the promise of Jesus that just as He rose from the dead, so also will He appear on the Last Day to raise me and all the dead. On that day, all the sinners who believe in Him will rise in body and soul and join Him in eternal life.

You, Dear Child of God, have that comfort, that great joy, because Jesus said, "If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever," and this promise is true for anyone, especially you, Dear Child of God.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.