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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
August 12, 2018
12th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Proverbs 9:1-6, 10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:14-21
Hymns: 296; 245; 398; 48:3 (38:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 6:41-51

⁴¹The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." ⁴²And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

⁴³Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. ⁴⁶Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. ⁴⁷Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Pursuing the Necessities of Life.

That's what we work for isn't it? We need to put food on the table and a roof over our heads. Wouldn't it be nice if it was all just there for us and we didn't have to face the challenges of life? A lot of people think that if they could just win the lottery then all their problems would go away. I guess it's just human nature to be focused on the daily necessities of life. They take a lot of our time and our attention and energy.

For the past couple of Sundays we have been reading from John chapter 6. We read of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. We read how following that miracle the people wanted to make Jesus king so that He could provide bread for them every day without them needing to go to work for it. Jesus then turned the discussion away from needing bread for the body to the food we need for the soul, and that Bread which came down from heaven. Jesus boldly stated for all the people to hear that **He** had come down from heaven; that **He** was the **Bread of Life**. And this is the lesson the Holy Spirit would impress upon our hearts today as we learn of --

THEME: Jesus: The Bread that Gives Life.

There is a brand of bread in the grocery store called Ezekiel Bread. They state that their ingredients, their recipe for bread comes right out of the Bible from the book of the Prophet Ezekiel. They want you to believe that because of this their brand of bread is better for you, more beneficial, and worth the higher price you have to pay for it. While Ezekiel Bread may indeed be wholesome and nutritious, there is a far superior bread whose ingredients are actually found in Holy Scripture and **only** in Holy Scripture. This is --

I. The Bread with Genuine Heavenly Ingredients.

This event is a major turning point in Jesus' public ministry, and the opening verses of our text capture the moment, capture the attitude.

John 6:41-42 “The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.”⁴² And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

Up to this point in time great crowds had gathered around Jesus. Just the day before a large multitude had chased around the end of the Sea of Galilee to get to the place Jesus was going to land in the boat He and the disciples had taken. There were over 5000 people waiting for Jesus, whom Jesus then taught, many whom Jesus healed of their sicknesses, and finally whom Jesus fed with the five loaves and two small fish. The people had seen what they had wanted, an earthly Messiah who would bring them ease and security in this life. Indeed, they were thinking of making Jesus king by force, but Jesus would have none of that.

Having once again crossed the Sea of Galilee the crowds pursued Him yet again, this time demanding a greater sign. They wanted Jesus to provide bread for everyone, each and every day. Then, they said, they would know He was the One! Instead Jesus presented Himself as the Bread from heaven they needed for more than bread for their stomachs. He was making the point that He came to them from heaven, and that He was a Messiah of a different nature than they desired.

Rejection was immediate. The people focused on Jesus’ family. They were all familiar with Mary and Joseph. This crowd was from the area of Nazareth and Capernaum. They knew Jesus brothers and sisters. They saw Jesus as being one of them, not someone come down from heaven. Their thoughts and desires and goals, both temporal and spiritual, were tied to this earth. They ridiculed Jesus’ teaching that He came down from heaven. They didn’t **want** Jesus to be the Bread from heaven. They cared very little about spiritual Bread. They wanted Jesus to give them *bread*, **real** bread they could **eat**! They wanted bread with earthly ingredients, grain ground to flour mixed with water and yeast, bread that would fill their bellies!

Jesus’ response was direct, holding out to them the wonder of the true bread that was of heavenly ingredients.

John 6:43-46 “Jesus therefore answered and said to them, “Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. ⁴⁶Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.”

They were pushing Him away. Jesus warned them against this. He made it clear that while they could push away the truth about Jesus, it was not something they could discover or come to on their own. This bread with ingredients from heaven comes to us from God the Father. No one can come to Jesus on their own. The gospel is foolishness to the unbeliever. By nature we are all blind, trapped in spiritual darkness. Luther laid this truth out for us in his explanation to the third article; God **the Holy Spirit calls us** by the gospel and enlightens us with His gifts. As Jesus says here, we are **drawn** to Jesus, drawn to faith by the Father and the truth which He sends down from above.

Jesus substantiates this claim by quoting the prophet Isaiah, that they would be taught by God! As Jesus stood before them this prophecy was being fulfilled. He was declaring the truth that saves, that He was the Bread of Life that was come down from heaven, and they needed that food which would feed their souls. Jesus was (and IS) the one and only way for them or anyone to come to God and be saved.

It is still true that people are drawn away from the truth by their own desires, by the perception that the needs of the body are more important than the needs of the soul. It is the difference between the feeling of urgency on the one hand, and knowing what’s truly important on the other hand. The things of this life press upon our consciousness and we chase after the bread that is inferior, made of poor ingredients. This is true not only for the body but also for the soul. The spiritual junk food of this world has permeated our society, it has even found its way into the church. Programs are deemed more fulfilling than doctrine. Science with its false theories about the origin of the universe has supplanted the truth of God’s creation. With that the glory of God and His gospel is

diminished in people's eyes because sin has been downplayed, denied, and finally even celebrated. Even Lutheran ministers who are supposed to be ministers of the gospel lead protests for abortion rights, and gay pride parades.

Yes, it is happening yet today that people push Jesus away, thinking of Him as just another man, that carpenter from Nazareth whose mother was Mary and father was Joseph, who was claiming to be something more than He was.

Jesus is (not was, but IS) who He said. Jesus is the Bread of Life!
Jesus is the --

II. Bread with Eternal Heavenly Benefits.

So many who doubt God, and push the Lord away do so with earthly arguments. They may argue that if there was a God in heaven He wouldn't allow evil in this world. They would make the Lord responsible for evil, instead of man and the devil. They would rather have God be a fierce Judge destroying all whom they deem to be worthy of destruction. This of course rarely includes those who see the evil in others, for they fail to see that the god they desire, that god who would crush the evil of this world, would be a god who would strike them down as fast as others. They fail to see that God is a God of grace who does not desire the death of the wicked but that they turn from their evil way and be forgiven. (Jeremiah 36:3) They fail to comprehend that "the Lord ... is not willing that any should perish, (that ANY should perish,) but that all should come to repentance" and "to the knowledge of the truth." (2 Peter 3:9) (1 Timothy 2:4)

In the greatness of His love for a fallen and lost world God sent His only begotten Son that whoever believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) Life is more than just the few short days we have here walking upon the face of the earth, a temporal life that is supported by physical bread made from wheat, or other grains. And yes, the Lord provides that bread also. But the benefits of that bread are short term. Jesus pointed out that indeed God did miraculously provide manna from heaven for forty years for the entire nation while they wandered in the wilderness. However, those that ate of that bread died. It sustained

them for a time in this life, but it did not provide the necessary nourishment for eternal life.

Jesus is the Bread of life. The benefits that come from consuming not with our mouths but with our hearts, is that we gain the nourishment we need for **eternal** life. And, yes, we have this life beginning right now. Jesus told His dear friend Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. (John 11:25-26) Already now the Lord has called us to life. He brings life to our cold and dead hearts, calling us to life and faith in God. However the promise remains that we shall never die, and though we may die we shall live. Our spirits will live with God in heaven, until Jesus’ promise is fulfilled, the absolute clear promise presented to us in our text “**I will raise Him up at the last Day.**” (v. 44)

How dare Jesus make such a claim? He does so on the basis of His redemptive sacrifice and His own resurrection to everlasting life. Even as death came into the world by one man Adam, and so passed upon all men for all have sinned, so by the One Man our Lord Jesus Christ life has been secured. (Romans 5:18-19) Jesus offered Himself as the perfect and complete sacrifice for sin, for the sin of the whole world. He suffered death in our place, not only temporal death, but that death which is being accursed by God! Jesus died and was buried, going before us into the grave. On the third day He rose again. He received authority from the Father to offer His life in our place, and to take His life up again (John 10:18) that we might know the peace of sins forgiven, that we might know the reality of resurrection. Jesus gave His flesh **for the life of the world!**

Jesus must be listed among the necessities of life. However, more people are inclined to place Jesus fairly low on that list of necessities. We are inclined to think of the material blessings that come to us from God as being our most pressing needs. May these precious words of truth presented to us by Jesus remind us that the one thing needful is that Bread of life which is come down from heaven! We must feed our souls upon that Bread which alone grants us eternal life.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)