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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
August 8, 2021  
11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Exodus 16:2-15; Ephesians 4:17-24

Hymns: 282; 358; 48; 53:1-4

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

Sermon Text: John 6:24-35

“When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. <sup>25</sup> And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup> Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

<sup>28</sup> Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

<sup>30</sup> Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?”

<sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ”

<sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup> Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

<sup>35</sup> And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

(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: What’s your source for the necessities of life?

That question can be addressed in many different ways. Since most of us have the means to buy the things we need we may interpret the question as asking which grocery store do we shop at. Some may shop online. Some may have their purchases delivered by the store or by Uber. Wait. Where do we turn when we are in need? Some may say to the government. There may a program that will help with the necessities of life. As children of God we know another answer. In our hour of need to turn to our God; we turn to our Savior. We know He cares for us, and hears our prayers, and will help us in our time of need. After all, we know that *“every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.”*

(James 1:17)

However, the devil and our own sinful flesh have a way of distorting everything to serve our fleshly purposes, including God’s providential care for us. That is what we see in the events surrounding our text this morning. The conversation between the crowd of Jews and Jesus occurs the next day after Jesus fed the five thousand with nothing more than a few loaves of bread and couple of small fish. And they all ate their full with many leftovers. This miracle took place because Jesus had compassion on the people and was gracious to feed them. They were out in a deserted place with no place for them to secure food. Sadly, things took a quick turn away from the spiritual to merely temporal and material considerations.

So the Spirit would instruct us in our view of the Lord so that we see --

**THEME: Jesus as the Source of True Spiritual Provisions.**

In our text we see how easy it is to start –

**I. Chasing After Jesus for all the Wrong Reasons.**

It is important to realize that when people chase after Jesus for all the wrong reasons, they are not coming to Jesus for the **right** reasons, they are actually not coming to Jesus at all.

The miracle feeding of the 5000 had happened on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had dispersed the crowd and sent the disciples on their way to cross the Sea of Galilee in a boat, while Jesus remained behind to spend time in prayer. The following morning the crowd started looking for Jesus, and went across the sea back to the area of Capernaum. They were actually startled when they found Jesus because they had observed that He had remained on the east side of the sea. They were not aware of how Jesus had gone to the disciples by walking on the water, and brought them safely and miraculously to the west shore of the sea.

The crowd was quite excited at finding Jesus again, but the Lord knew their hearts. He knew they no longer desired to hear what He had to teach them, but rather that they now saw Jesus as an easy, convenient source for food. They were chasing after Jesus for all the wrong reasons, reasons for this life only. Jesus tried to turn them back to considering the spiritual rather than earthly things. *“Jesus answered them and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.’<sup>27</sup> Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.’ ”* (v. 26-27)

How easy it is for people, including us, to get caught up in the here and now at the expense of the spiritual. Of course, we feel the pressures of daily life and understand the need of putting food on the table. And of course, we also understand that the Lord provides. It all goes wrong when we allow ourselves to make Jesus

all about fixing **this** life and making **this** life easier, just the way we think it ought to be. For many the struggle of just simply putting food on the table **is** a struggle. The temptation to make Jesus all about this life could be very tempting indeed. We would put Jesus to the test. That is how the thinking was going for the people in that crowd gathered around Jesus.

However, it didn't get any better once Jesus turned the conversation to things spiritual. When they asked the Lord, "*What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?*" (v.28) they were still chasing after Jesus for all the wrong reasons. They were expecting Jesus to give them the same kind of formula of good works that they had always received from the scribes and Pharisees. It was always about securing one's own righteousness. They expected Jesus to tell them more of the same, so that they might find the way to God within themselves.

Again, it is so easy to twist things to try to make of Christ a second lawgiver. So many are lured into thinking that even though Jesus saved us from our sins, we make ourselves better Christians. We make ourselves more acceptable to God and more assured of salvation by following a formula of good works. Many churches even in our own community will focus their worship on what we need to be doing for the Lord in the coming week, rather than what the Lord has done for us. It all comes down to chasing after Jesus for all the wrong reasons.

It is crazy easy to get our own thinking fouled up in this way. It appeals to the flesh, and it seems to follow theological reason. We read in our epistle lesson that we are to "*put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*" (Ephesians 4:24) We are supposed to turn away from sinning and glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits which are God's! (1 Corinthians 6:20) So then, where does all this go wrong? It goes wrong when we think this is done by our own power and strength. It goes wrong when we think this adds to our peace with God, more than being cleansed by the blood of Christ. It goes wrong when we think this makes us better in the eyes of the Lord. It goes wrong when we believe we are adding to our own assurance of salvation. Then we are taking glory to ourselves that only belongs to Christ.

Hear Jesus' answer to this assembly of Jewish people. "*Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'*" (v.29) Our salvation is through faith alone. The work of God that needs to be fulfilled in us is faith in Christ. Even this is not done by our own will, but by the Holy Spirit working through the Word. "*No man can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*" (1 Corinthians 12:3) The Holy Spirit calls us by the gospel. The Holy Spirit fulfills this work in us so that it is all by grace. All that we do is to the praise and glory of Jesus alone.

## II. Finding in Jesus those Provisions Necessary for Spiritual Life

Jesus' answer went against what they wanted to hear, against what they were used to hearing. Immediately they challenged Jesus to prove Himself credible. "*They said to Him, 'What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?'*"<sup>31</sup> *Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'*" (v.30-31)

We can observe how they were still tied to this earth in their thoughts and their desires. Remember this was only **one day** after Jesus had fed the crowd of 5000, but now that wasn't a great enough sign to convince them to follow Jesus. They wanted more. They wanted more **bread**. They thought of the manna from heaven the Children of Israel received for **forty years** in the wilderness. Now, if Jesus would do something like that, then they would follow Jesus! How great would it be to have your bread provided every morning for the rest of or life! They were back to chasing Jesus for all the wrong reasons again, weren't they?

Jesus turned their attention back to Him, back to the spiritual! "*Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.'*"<sup>33</sup> *For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'*"<sup>34</sup> *Then they said to Him, 'Lord, give us this bread always.'*"<sup>35</sup> *And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'*" (v. 32-35) The true

Bread, that which all mankind needs to live is that Bread for the soul which God the Father sent into the world. Jesus nourishes the soul. Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus and only Jesus can bring life to our lifeless souls. This crowd of Jews had Jesus right before their eyes, but they couldn't see that salvation which God had prepared for them. Asking Jesus to provide this bread for them always reveals how they missed the point. They still confused the physical with the spiritual.

Jesus finally proclaimed in simple language a truth too profound for any man to grasp. Jesus is the Bread of Life. Those who come to Jesus through faith receive that soul enriching nourishment that endures to eternal life. Jesus' conversation with this Jewish audience continued for quite some time, and sadly, it didn't end well. This truth which makes it clear that Jesus and only Jesus can bring life and salvation was not well received.

How shall our conversation with Jesus end? By grace we have been brought to faith in Jesus as our Redeemer, who purchased our salvation through His bitter sufferings and death. By grace we come to hear the truth of a crucified Savior who rose again that we might have life in His name. By grace we have been brought to understand that it is by hearing and believing the Word of God, this gospel of God's love and forgiveness, that we nourish and sustain our souls as we make our way through this life. Jesus is the One who feeds our souls and satisfies us with good things so that we have life, spiritual and eternal life! Jesus is the one who quenches the thirst of the sin parched soul so that we shall never hunger or thirst for righteousness again. We have it all in Him!

Now, where shall we turn for the necessities of life? The world sees all the religions of the world as beings equally valid, equally filled with hope and peace. People shop all over the place in the varying false religions of the world, and their souls are filled with empty husks that have no nourishment. They die of spiritual malnutrition.

Isaiah prophesied:

*“Why do you spend money for what is not bread,  
And your wages for what does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,*

*And let your soul delight itself in abundance.*

<sup>3</sup>*Incline your ear, and come to Me.*

*Hear, and your soul shall live;*

*And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—*

*The sure mercies of David.” (Isaiah 55:2-3)*

We have this life-giving Bread of Life in Jesus! The necessities of eternal life are fulfilled in Him. This Bread of life is there for us, free of charge! Come to Jesus and you shall never hunger or thirst ever again! Come to Jesus! Don't waste your spiritual resources on that which cannot satisfy, on that which cannot sustain life. And certainly don't, please don't neglect to feed your souls, or the souls of families, when God has made the Bread of Life is so readily available.

**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)