

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Grant Park, Illinois
The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, August 5, 2018
John 6:24-35

Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who 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." "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

What would you have wanted if you were in the crowd in our gospel lesson? The day before you would have experienced something wonderful. You had gone to see Jesus and you saw him do incredible things. He healed the sick that were brought to him. He would have taught you all day long and his teaching was powerful and full of authority. Finally, at the end of the day, he provided you with a meal big enough to feed well over 5,000 people. What would you have wanted?

Our lesson picks up the day after Jesus miraculous feeding of the 5,000. The people Jesus fed were excited. They had just had an amazing day. They saw the sick healed, they'd heard amazing teaching and had their bellies filled without having to work for it. The crowd wanted to keep the good times rolling and reasoned the best way to keep the good times rolling would be by making Jesus king. This led them to try and force Jesus to be their king, but Jesus thwarted their plans by withdrawing to a lonely place.

The crowd, however, would not be stopped that easily. They slept on their feelings and sleep confirmed their thinking. They knew what type of king they wanted Jesus, but there was a bit of a problem. Jesus and his disciples had vanished. Where had they gone? They needed to find Jesus in order to implement their plan. **“Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.”**

The crowd crosses over to the other side of the lake and who do they find? **“When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, ‘Rabbi, when did you get here?’”** The crowd goes back to other side of the lake and find Jesus is already there! The crowd knew Jesus had come in a boat and that boat was gone. However, they had seen Jesus’ disciples leave without him. How had he gotten over to the other side? It is the first question which they ask him.

John shares with his readers the way Jesus got to the other side. Jesus’ disciples got caught in a terrible storm on the lake. Jesus proceeded to walk across the water to rescue them and get them safely to shore. However, Jesus doesn’t feel the need to share how he got there with the people. Instead, he answers them in a different way. **“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.’”**

“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.” Jesus’ words show he knows what is on the people’s minds. He knows they had a really good day yesterday and they want that really good day to keep rolling. Jesus knows they want their tummies to keep being filled without having to work for it and their minds are filled with visions of an easy life.

Jesus has a different vision of things and he tries to steer the people in a different direction. He reminds the people about an important truth with regards to food. Food doesn’t last. It spoils. It goes bad. Jesus is pleading with the people not to focus on things which spoil and go bad. He wants them to focus on things which last and endure. Sure, their tummies might be full right now, but guess what? The full feeling doesn’t last. They’re going to need to eat again really soon and soon after that and after that.

The conversation continues and reveals the people miss Jesus’ point. **“So they asked him, ‘What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our**

forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who 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." Jesus tries to steer the people away from earthly food and earthly glory, but it doesn't work. The people remain stuck on having Jesus fill their bellies and creating an easy life for themselves. They end up challenging Jesus' power by insulting him and saying his miracle wasn't as impressive as what Moses did when he fed the Israelites in the wilderness.

Jesus patiently points out that Moses wasn't the one who provided the bread in the desert. God provided it. Moses wasn't able to do the miraculous. God was and now God was providing something even more miraculous than manna from heaven. He was providing himself in the flesh and he was going to give these people something greater than daily bread. He was giving the people the bread of life which gives eternal life.

What does Jesus' interaction with the crowd teach you and me? Well, how often don't our lives often revolve around the exact same issues which these people bring up to Jesus? The people placed a high importance on the here and now. They placed a high importance on food and making sure they had enough possessions on earth. Meanwhile, Jesus tried to lift their focus from this world and put it on the next.

How often don't you get caught up in focusing on the here and now rather than the eternal? We live in a consumer culture which places material things above all else. It teaches us the way to happiness is to hoard our toys or replace them with the newest and best. Our culture also teaches us that struggle is the enemy. Life should be easy and comfortable without struggle or pain. It sounds a lot like what these people were asking Jesus to provide.

Are Christians immune from the world's idolatrous impulses? Kristin thought she was. She studied her Bible, came to church on a regular basis, prayed, taught Sunday school and raised her kids to be Christian, but she wasn't content. She struggled with jealousy because her friends appeared to have such better lives than she did. They had fancier houses. They wore nicer clothes and ate finer food. She tried to resist these feelings, but they ate and gnawed away at her. She grew tired and wearied by them.

Finally, she brought her struggles up to her husband. Kristin's husband knew his wife and the problems she faced, but he gently reminded her that not all was as it seemed. Their next door neighbors had cheated on each other and were in divorce court. The friends who ate downtown every night had kids who hated them because they were never home. Her best friend was scared to death because she had cancer and no source of comfort in her life because she had no faith in God.

He reminded Kristin she had something better than all of them because she had Jesus and he has given her eternal life. Yes, she might not have the life most people envy, but she had Jesus. This life and all its treasures pass away, but the promises which Jesus offers will never pass away. Now, I understand we all

are going to feel like Kristin once in a while, but we also need to remember who we are and who we trust in. We are Christians who trust in Jesus.

What benefit do we receive because we trust in Jesus? **“Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’ Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.’”** Jesus promises that all who believe in him will never be hungry and will never suffer from thirst.

Sounds pretty amazing, doesn't it? Yet, we need to remember what kind of hunger and thirst Jesus is speaking about. He is talking about spiritual hunger and thirst rather than physical hunger and thirst. What comfort does this bring? It reassures us that no matter where life takes us whether we are well fed or hungry, rich or poor, sick or healthy, happy or sad that we can always come to Jesus and feed our souls with food which won't leave us hungry and drink which quenches.

Kristin's husband brought her back to this reality. Yes, there are going to be people who are doing better than us in life, but Jesus is better than anything this world can offer to us. He provides life which lasts far beyond this world and forever in the next. The things of this world break. They don't last. They spoil and fade. Jesus doesn't. He doesn't break. He doesn't spoil. He doesn't fade. Instead, he gives life which lasts and endures into eternity. His promises never break down or disappoint.

However, we still live in a sin filled world and still struggle with sin ourselves. Kristin was a model Christian, but she still struggled with sin. Don't let your guilt overwhelm you when you struggle with sin and don't be shocked by it either. Every Christian (and I mean every Christian) struggles with sin and these struggles leave our souls hungry and thirsty, but our struggles teach us something about Jesus. He is the bread which removes our sin fueled hunger. He is the drink which quenches our sin parched soul.

Ultimately, the large crowd which came seeking Jesus rejected his message because he didn't fit the bill of the savior they wanted. We'll see more of this in the coming weeks where we look more at John 6. However, I want us to remember we are different than the crowd. We believe Jesus is our savior from sin who gives us eternal life. This is a truth which satisfies our thirsting and hungering souls because it gives us heaven. Amen.