

No. _____

John 6:24-35 (New International Version - UK)

²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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. ²⁸ Then they asked him, What must we do to do the works God requires? ²⁹ Jesus answered, The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent. ³⁰ So they asked him, What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' ³² 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. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ³⁴ Sir, they said, from now on give us this bread. ³⁵ 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.

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN PENTECOST

16 August 2009

(The installation of Vicar Joel Hoff)

JESUS IS THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

- I. The miracle was intended to teach**
- II. The lesson was in the ministry of Jesus**
- III. The blessing was in the believing**

Hymns:

GRACE

8/16/09

St. John 6:24-35

Dearly Beloved of the Lord Christ,

Bread is known as the staff of life. Most people eat bread and enjoy it. Even those people who follow the Atkins diet are usually people who like bread but are trying to avoid all those carbs. Who of us would not enjoy a slice or two of fresh homemade rye bread? Or how about some fresh sprouted wheat bread with raspberry jam? Sounds good, doesn't it!

We used to go to Roland's Bakery in Houston for their fresh rye bread. Our children always looked forward to some of that bread when they came home on vacation. If you like bread, you will find those special places like the Bohemian bakery and meat market on hwy 59 between Grand and El Campo, or the Ceck bakery on I-35 South of Desoto, or the Whole Foods store in Dallas.

However, in the final analysis the truth of God's Word comes home. Man cannot live by bread alone. The people that Jesus fed on the shores of Galilee liked bread, too. They liked the bread Jesus had fed them so much that they tracked him back to the other side of the lake. They probably thought the future was bright with possibilities if this man could say a prayer and turn a sack lunch into enough food to feed an army.

It is obvious that the crowd of people was seeking Jesus because they were pleasantly filled with bread. Jesus had miraculously fed the 5000 with five barley loaves and two small fish. All had eaten and were satisfied. After the meal twelve baskets of leftovers were gathered. This miracle took place right before their eyes. Unfortunately they did not understand the significance of what Jesus had done. They were not thinking of what their heavenly Father was providing for their eternal well being. They were thinking of what this Rabbi could do for them here and now. They had mouths to feed. They had obligations that needed to be met and this teacher was the best thing going for them at the time. So they were sidetracked by the warm feeling of having their stomachs filled and missed the point of the miracle. They missed that **JESUS IS THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN**. It blew right by them that Jesus was teaching them something about Himself – they missed the lesson of the miracle as it pertained to Jesus and they were missing the blessing of the eating which was believing in Jesus.

Our text picks up the story the day after the feeding of the 5000. The night before Jesus had walked out on the water to rescue His disciples who were struggling against a strong wind which was keeping them from making progress in crossing the Sea of Galilee. In the morning they were safely on shore and the crowd wanted to know when and how He had come. Listen to Jesus answer to their question. *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.* Jesus is telling the people that they had follow Him for the wrong reason. They did not understand the purpose of the miracle. These people were motivated by their carnal appetites.

People can eat only a certain amount of food and they usually need less than they eat. What is left eventually spoils. In the Mediterranean climate without modern refrigeration, food would not keep long at all. So Jesus warned the people not to focus all their energies on getting the *food that spoils*, but they should focus on food that endures to eternal life. Listen. *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 tells them here in John 6 that they've set their sights too low. They ate the loaves and had their fill—that's why they were here. They liked that full feeling in their stomachs and they liked how easily they'd gotten it. Jesus wants them and us to know that what's truly important is not the bread he makes, but the bread he is. Jesus is the Bread from heaven. The heavenly Father had given approval of Jesus both at His baptism and on the mount of transfiguration. He had stated loudly and clearly that Jesus is His beloved Son and that He was well pleased with Jesus. The Father also said that we were to listen to Him.

The people of Galilee clearly didn't know Jesus as well as they thought they did. In those famous words of the first chapter of this Gospel, John writes, "**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**" (1:14) Jesus is not merely man; he is the eternal Son of God who took on man's nature. The words of the *Te Deum*, that ancient confession of faith that we'll sing after the sermon some Sundays states; Jesus is the Christ, the King of glory, the eternal Son of the Father, who became man to set us free. He came and bought us with the price of his own blood so that he could bring us to glory everlasting. That part of Jesus' identity the crowd did not know—and they didn't seem very interested in learning about it either.

If all Jesus is for us is a meal ticket, we don't know Him either. We need to see Him as the substitute that the Father has given to take our place under the law, who has provided the obedience for us that that law requires and who has pay the penalty that our disobedience deserves.

The crowd was still hung up on the bread they had eaten. Listen. **Then they asked him, What must we do to do the works God requires?** ²⁹ **Jesus answered, The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.** ³⁰ **So they asked him, What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?** ³¹ **Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'** Can you believe it? They had just benefitted from the miraculous feeding for which they had done nothing. Jesus simply had compassion on them and fed them. But here they are asking what they can do. There must be something they can do to earn favor with God and a place in His kingdom.

What sign could Jesus give? Moses had fed their forefathers every day in the wilderness. It would be nice if Jesus could do something similar. The crowd had not connected the dots. They did not see that the Manna was to teach the children of Israel to trust God day by day. They did not see that as Israel would learn to trust God for their earthly food, they could also trust His promises to them for the spiritual food He would send from heaven to satisfy their souls. They were being spiritually exercised every day to build up their faith.

Just listen to what Jesus says here in answer to their question about works which God requires. **Jesus answered, The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.** Manna was a blessing from heaven. The people received this blessing of the Manna by eating it every day. Jesus is the fulfillment of that picture. He is the Bread from heaven. The text says, **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.** ³³ **For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.** ³⁴ **Sir, they said, from now on give us this bread.** ³⁵ **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.**

Jesus is essentially telling the people here "Just wait! I've got an even greater miracle for you. *I am the bread that came down from heaven.*" And what did they see? Well, the same fellow they'd seen for 30 or so years, Joseph and Mary's son. And they murmured. But isn't that the way God so often works? You come to God's house to hear God's Word and what do you see - Someone reading, teaching, preaching, from a book. God's presence isn't apparent to the senses. And people are baptized here, washed clean of their sins by God in the bath that Christ instituted. But what do you see? A few splashes of water applied to the candidate for baptism. You come here to feast with the Son of God in meal he established and in which he promises to be present. And what do you see? Small cups of wine and thin wafers of bread are being distributed. You can almost understand how an outsider might conclude, *Nothing much is happening here.* Just like the people of Galilee looked at Jesus and concluded, "*How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?*" But all this comes from not listening to the Word. Do as Martin Luther suggested, "Do not rationalize and reason it out! Close your eyes... Believe the Word which Christ submits to you." *"I am the bread that came down from heaven."*

We have been feasting on this Bread this morning in our Bible Study and in our Worship. Believing in Jesus is food for our souls. Believing in Jesus is the focus of our faith. Believing in Jesus is our

membership certificate to the eternal kingdom. The blessing is in the eating and the eating is believing.
Amen.