

Sermon John 6 22 35 10th S af Pent Series B

Sermon: 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: John 6:22-35 (vv. 26-27)

Theme: The Bread of Life

Goal: To eat the Bread of Life is to believe in Jesus.

Dear Friends in Jesus,

In our text for today, the crowds did not realized that their souls were in serious danger. They were fed by the Lord, as we heard a couple of weeks ago, when He fed the 5,000 with a mere five loaves of bread and two fish. They tried to take Him by force and make Him their king, but He got away from their grasp. They were relentless in their pursuit of Him. They wanted more from Him. He fed their bellies, and He healed their sick. Rather than being grateful for what He had given them, they salivated for even more from Him. They had a need for greed. The Lord saw into their hearts and spoke the truth to them, saying, "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" (v. 26). But the Lord wanted them to crave the one thing that was needed: "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. 27). The Lord is asking them to believe in Him. "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (v. 29). Did you notice what the Lord says? "This is the work OF GOD, that you believe in Him whom He sent." It is God's work to bring a person to saving faith in Christ. The blessed Reformer, Martin Luther, expresses this truth beautifully in his teaching of the Creed:

*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but **the Holy Spirit** has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.*

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true. [Third Article]

Again, the Lord was quite clear with the crowds. And again, the crowds missed the point of the Lord's teaching. They were not interested in His teaching. "Therefore they said to Him, 'What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will you do?'" (v. 30). They failed to see the feeding of the 5,000, the Lord's feeding these very people Himself with five loaves and two fish, as a sign of God's grace, as the miracle it truly was. They were greedy; they wanted more...more for their bellies. These people cared little about their own souls, which were in jeopardy; they wanted some parting gifts from the Lord of hosts. They wanted Him to perform another miracle because they refused to see His feeding them hours earlier as the miracle it truly is. They wanted something like the manna that fell for their forefathers. The Lord pointed out their error in thinking that Moses gave them this bread, but it was God who fed them with this bread called manna, which means "What is it?" Their forefathers did not know what this was, and their descendants did not know that the Bread of Life was in their presence that very moment. The Lord said, "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. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (vv. 32-33). Still motivated by greed, they still asked for loaves: "Then they said to Him, 'Lord, give us this bread always'" (v. 34).

The crowds did not want what the Lord was offering them; they did not want Him to feed their souls. The Lord was in the midst

of these people whom He had just fed and was willing to give them more than they could ask for; all they needed to do was to believe in Him, and He would give them His Holy Spirit to work in them faith in Christ; the Spirit would get them to crave the Bread of Life.

The Lord is always present among us to give us His gifts for our souls, but we, like the crowds, are usually looking for something else. We want the Lord to give us **what** we want **when** we want it. We have the spiritual maturity of two-year-olds who know one word well: "**MINE!**" For this reason the blessed Apostle St. Peter exhorts us: "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:2-3). We have tasted that the Lord is gracious, for He has fed us on His Word, but we spit it out because we are uncomfortable with some of the things our Lord says to us. We want from Him what He has not promised to give. We seek Him in places where He has not promised to be found. We have made gods of our bellies, turning our faith into a treasure hunt. Our Lord teaches us, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt. 6:19-21). Hear the words of Luther in a sermon on our text:

"Here Christ begins to speak about the theme of life. He declares: 'I will give you life so surely that you will never hunger nor thirst, that is, will never die; you will have enough to eat and to drink forevermore, that is, you will live in all eternity.' These are unusually direct and well-defined words. In all Holy Writ there is hardly a more pointed statement that Christ is the God-given Bread and Food, and that he who eats this bread shall live forever and be satisfied, without ever hungering or thirsting. And this Bread, sent to them from heaven, they behold before their very eyes. Christ says: 'He who comes to Me.' ...It might have been proper for Him to say 'He who eats Me' instead of 'He who

*comes to Me,' but that would have been premature. Christ wants the Jews to understand Him; therefore He says 'He who comes to Me' and then interprets this with the words 'He who believes in Me.' This is an incisive commentary: **to come to Christ is the same as to believe in Christ.** That is what it means to have the bread and eat it. Of course, Christ is not speaking of eating in church or of feasting on beef or veal at a wedding, as the Jews might have imagined. No, He is speaking of bread in the sense of coming to Christ, that is, believing in Christ. For to eat, to come to Christ, and to believe in Christ are all one and the same thing.*

"He comes to us, and the Father gives manna from heaven; all that is wanting is that you come to Him in turn. Of course, this may offend and vex them, and prompt them to retort: 'We are already with You.' 'No, to eat Me means to come to Me and believe in Me.' You can come to Christ in no other way, even if you were His nearest kinsman, than by means of faith in Him. Christ is closer to you through His Word than your son with his arms entwined around your neck. To come to Christ does not necessitate a long journey. ...No, you come to Christ when you believe in Him. Then He is with you and very close to you. He lies right before us, in front of our eyes and ears, so that we can see and hear Him. Just believe in Him, and then you have eaten Him and come to Him."(Luther till here)

Yes, Christ is close to you. He is near you, and He is in you, as you have eaten Christ by believing in Him, for He has drawn you to Himself by His being lifted up on the tree of the cross, where He gave His body and shed His blood, the very body and blood He gives you to eat and drink, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. And, as the blessed Apostle St. Paul writes, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Our Lord invites you to come to His Table for this sacramental eating every time we celebrate the Holy Communion. To prepare us for this sacramental eating, our Lord prepares us to eat Him spiritually; that is to say, He sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts

(for this is the work of God) so that we would believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. He continues to feed us spiritually on His Word through preaching and catechesis, in order that we would make the good confession and have the privilege of eating sacramentally, feasting on our Lord's body and blood at His Table, receiving a foretaste of the Feast to come in heaven. This is no bonus round; it is heaven itself for which we strive—with the Holy Spirit at work in us. We do not even need a secret password, for we have confessed our sins and confessed our faith in our Triune God. May this Offertory serve as our prayer this day: "*Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of blessing. Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown that we may be fed with the Bread of Life. Gather the hopes and dreams of all; unite them with the prayers we offer now. Give us a foretaste of the Feast to come*" (LW, pp. 168-169). Amen.

Pastor Mark Schlamann, Shepherd of the Hills Evangelical Lutheran Church
Morgantown, Indiana, 2006

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