

Sermon for The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Date: August 8, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

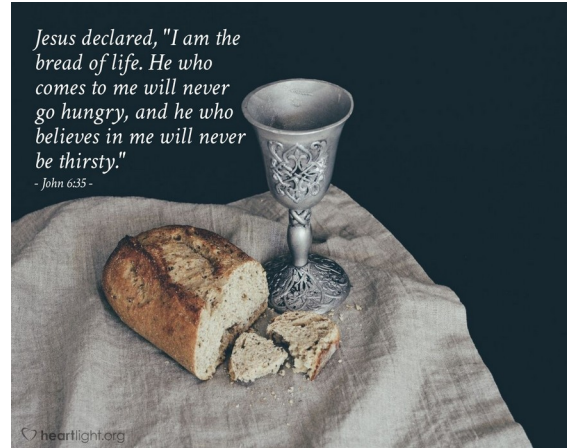
Old Testament: 1 Kings 19:1-8

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 4:17-5:2

Gospel Reading: John 6:35-51

Sermon Text: John 6:35-51

Sermon Title: God Serves Himself



Introit: Psalm 34:8-10; Antiphon: Psalm 145:16

Hymns:

LSB 873 – Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies

LSB 534 – Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor

LSB 809 – Great is Thy Faithfulness

Songs:

Lord I Lift Your Name on High

Raise A Hallelujah

El Shaddai - Amy Grant

Good God Almighty - Crowder

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: John 6:35-51

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

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Grace, mercy and peace to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

On occasion when I was growing up, my mom would make homemade bread. I would come in the house and its wonderful aroma filled the rooms. My sisters and I would beg her for some. She was usually reluctant to spoil our appetites, but when it came to homemade bread, she usually gave in and let us have a slice while it was still warm. It was so good! Looking back, the reason it was so good was that it was baked and shared in love. My mother put a lot of herself into it, so to speak.

In a sense that is an example of what Jesus does for us. Jesus said :

I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.¹

Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the source of true and genuine life. He said:

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”²

This is “Cross-talk.” Jesus gave nothing less than His Body and Blood on the cross, for you. It is “Cross-talk” for Jesus to say, “this is for you.” “Faith-talk” is to eat the Bread of life, and to drink the Blood of salvation. It is an act of faith. It is believing in Jesus and His Word as He says:

This is the will of my Father that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.³

Just moments before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He told Martha and Mary:

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.⁴

Homemade bread is so much better than store-bought bread. Life from, in, with and under “the Bread of Life” is so much better than life without Jesus. It is not just a matter of quantity. It is also a matter of quality. It is not just more of the “same old, same old.” It’s not just more of what is affected by sin. It is not just more of what is broken and heartbreaking. It is not just more death and death’s

1 John 6:35

2 John 6:51

3 John 6:40

4 John 11:25–26

threat. It is new. It is different. Jesus has put Himself into it. He loves us! God forgives us! God has got us! He, Emmanuel, God, loves us!

Life with Jesus is far more than life that is here today and gone tomorrow. Life with Jesus is far more than what we can touch and taste and see. It is far more than what we have or possess. It is far more than what makes us feel good or feel bad. It is far more than the working out of our hopes and dreams.

The 5,000+ people to whom Jesus is speaking, in the Gospel lesson today, still had the taste of the loaves and fish in their mouths, the loaves and fish with which Jesus had miraculously fed them. They were remembering the ancient record of manna with which God fed their ancestors in the wilderness. What they weren't remembering was their ancestors ate the manna and died. Life is far more than bread. Life is more than our experience in this world.

God does provide for our physical needs. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Martin Luther, in his Small Catechism, reminds us in his explanation of the Lord's Prayer that "daily bread" is everything we need for this life. God does provide these things, but Jesus came for so much more. He came as the Source of eternal life, life with God that is at peace and forever.

Jesus fed the crowd with bread as God fed His people Israel in the wilderness with manna. Jesus did this as a sign, to make a point. The same point God made for His Old Testament people in the wilderness. Scripture records:

He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.⁵

Jesus is that Word. He is the Word Made Flesh. He is, "the living bread that came down from heaven."⁶ God calls us, and invites us, to "taste and see that the Lord is good."⁷ In Jesus we are brought into the very presence of God, and we touch Him. He is here. He is physically here. Here we are able to know and experience God; Fullness of life; Closeness to, and intimacy with, God in a way that is otherwise impossible. Our brokenness, sin, guilt, and shame corrupt our relationship with God. Death breaks it forever, which is why death is called the ultimate enemy. Jesus went to the cross for us. He suffered and endured death for

5 Deuteronomy 8:3

6 John 6:51

7 Psalm 34:8

us. Then He defeated the ultimate enemy, Death. He rose from the dead for us. He lives. He forgives. He reconciles our relationship with God, now and forever.

That is why He came. Jesus said:

This is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise them up on the last day.⁸

“That I should lose nothing!” In speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd, Jesus said:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.⁹

We can't be any more secure than that. We cannot receive any greater gift than that, and yet they grumbled about Jesus.¹⁰ Their grumbling is very much like the constant, stiff-necked, faithless grumbling of the people of Israel against God in the wilderness. It is very much like the attitude of Jesus' hometown people in the synagogue at Nazareth when they rejected Him.

It is very much like our own grumble. Grumbling is refusing to believe and trust in Jesus. Grumbling is wanting something different than what He gives or, worse, someone different than who He is. Grumbling is losing out on the life He alone give.¹¹

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Jesus is the bread of life. He feeds us through His Word. When we repent we are forgiven in the Words of Holy Absolution. There Jesus takes away all that stands against us. Jesus takes away all that stands between us and God. Jesus takes away all that separates us from God. Jesus feeds us in the Sacred and Holy Sacrament of the Altar. When we gather around His Table, we receive nothing less than Himself. In the bread of His Supper, we receive nothing less than His body broken for us, and in the wine His blood shed for us. We receive these for the forgiveness of sins.

That is what lies on the altar for the repentant sinner. For those who reject these things; for those who reject Jesus' gift, they reject Jesus. St. Paul warns us about the seriousness of coming here with unrepentant hearts.

8 John 6:39

9 John 10:27–28

10 John 6:41

11 John 14:6

Anyone who eats and drinks, is eating and drinking judgment on themselves, when they do not recognize the Lord's Body.¹²

When we gather around His Table, we receive nothing less than Himself. In the bread of His Supper we receive nothing less than His body broken for us, and His blood shed for us in the wine. We receive these for the forgiveness of sins. For those who reject these things reject Jesus, reject Jesus' forgiveness and reject the salvation that only Jesus can give.

St. Paul teaches , by God-breathed Words:

God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him.¹³

Recalling our Holy Baptism Paul teaches:

Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and... be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and... put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness... Be imitators of God as beloved children.

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.¹⁴

“A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Not unlike that fragrant, homemade bread, prepared and baked in love, made, served and shared in love.

Jesus is the “read of Life.” Though His Divine love He feeds us, nourishes us and sustains us in life eternal by giving Himself for us.

May God in His divine providence instill that in our hearts and minds until the day when we, in peace and joy, see Him face to face.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

12 1 Corinthians 11:29

13 Ephesians 2:4-6

14 Ephesians 4:22-24; 5:1-2

