

## Sermon Drat

**Text: John 6:22–35**

**Sermon: “The Bread of Life”**

In the book “My Hand in His” the author shares a story of an elderly man on his deathbed. His family has come to be with him. One of his sons is a pastor. It’s Saturday, the next day is Sunday. The man tells his son to go home and preach to his people the next day. He tells his son that if he dies while his son is gone, his son will know where to find him.

“You’ll know where to find me.” Imagine dying and living in the kind of faith to say that! Imagine sharing such confidence and assurance with your loved ones! Eternal life is real. It’s life that really matters. It’s life that makes a difference. Life in this world will finally fail us. But not the life God gives. Not the life Jesus gives. Jesus says in today’s Gospel: ***“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal”*** (v 27).

Earlier, Jesus had miraculously fed some five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish. This was meant to be a sign pointing beyond itself to something more.

To Jesus as Son of God. To Jesus as the source of eternal life. To Jesus as ***“the true bread from heaven.”*** To Jesus as ***“the bread of life.”*** For Jesus, the Bread of Life, is the source of eternal life.

Unfortunately, the people around Jesus stayed stuck at the sign, at the bread, at the free meal. Jesus attempts to move them along, to lift their sights to a higher level: ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal”*** (vs 26–27). They respond with good intentions: ***“Then they said to him, ‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’”*** (v 28). And Jesus answers: ***“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent”*** (v 29). The work of God, the work God desires of us, the work God works in us, is not work but faith. It’s not what we do but what God gives us in Jesus.

The people had trouble catching on: ***“So they said to him, ‘Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written,***

***“He gave them bread from heaven to eat”***” (vs 30–31). They were remembering how God fed his people in the wilderness with manna. Today’s Old Testament Reading is the backstory to our Gospel. Jesus says to them:

***“Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave 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”*** (vs 32–33). Then, they begin to get it: ***“They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ 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”***” (vs 34–35).

Jesus’ words about never thirsting bring to mind his words to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:

***“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,” he told her, “but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.***

***The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”*** (John 4:13–14). Eternal life is God’s gift in Jesus. The bread

of life is God’s gift. Jesus is the true bread from heaven. Jesus is the bread of life.

Jesus' discourse on the bread of life goes on to the end of John 6. At this point, bread, hunger and eating, thirsting, and drinking are all metaphors. Put together, all together, they're all about Jesus and believing in him. Jesus is the source of eternal life. Believing in Jesus is God's work in us. It's the work of the Holy Spirit.

As with the crowd Jesus fed, engaged, and taught, we sometimes tend to stay stuck at the sign, at the lowest level of things, on material, physical things. We focus on food, on material things, on the things of our earthly existence, on physical and emotional blessings, and on the comforts of this life. It is for higher things that Jesus came. It is for the purpose of giving and sustaining eternal life that God gave us Jesus. Life with God, our life with God, has been disrupted and interrupted by sin. Our deepest hunger, though we don't always realize it, is for God. Jesus, in his suffering and death on the cross, and in his resurrection from the dead, satisfies this hunger, fills the hole we all have in our hearts for God. He reconnects us with God. For eternity. As Paul writes in Romans 8, ***"Nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ."*** Nothing!

Bread, despite the bad rap on carbs these days, is a staple of physical life. It sustains life. It's the "stuff" of life. It's with this in mind that Jesus says, ***"I am the bread of life."*** When he was in the wilderness tempted by the devil—when he was hungry, tempted to turn stones into loaves of bread—Jesus quoted words from Deuteronomy 8: ***"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'"*** (Matthew 4:4). Jesus is that living Word. He says in John 5, ***"As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself"*** (John 5:26).

Jesus told the crowd, ***"You are seeking me . . . because you ate your fill of the loaves"*** (John 6:26). What do we seek from Jesus? We often seek what we can get from Jesus rather than seeking Jesus himself. We seek feel-good things. We seek things on every other level than spiritual. In describing Jesus' feeding of the five thousand, John says, ***"Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them"*** (6:11). ***"When he had given thanks."*** Thanksgiving is not just "for" but "to." Giving thanks is about relationship with the giver. God is the Giver.

In today's Epistle, Paul reminds us that Jesus feeds and nourishes his Body, the Church, to build it up in faith, love, and maturity: ***"Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift"*** (Ephesians 4:7).

Grace to live life fully, faithfully, and eternally with God, in relationship with God.

The words "Stay Home, Stay Safe" still ring in our ears. During the peak of Covid-19 businesses, stores, restaurants, and bars were all closed; everything considered unsafe, and nonessential was shut down.

Unemployment was at an all-time high. Some things were in short supply: toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and even bread. People were fearful, angry, anxious, uncertain, frustrated, bored, ready for it to be over, impatient for things to return to normal. And indeed, we are still waiting on a lot of accounts.

But there was a new normal in place, and normal as we once knew it was a long way off. Churches were closed and many still are and some will not be re-opening. We were limited to streaming services.

Zoom meetings became a way of life. People missed being able to gather, the fellowship. And we were largely observing a fast with respect to the Lord's Supper.

Jesus says, "***I am the bread of life***" (John 6:35). He gave his life on a cross for you, for me, for all, so that we might have eternal life. So even then, in and through it all, there was no shortage of "***the bread of life.***" In and through all things, there is no shortage of "***the bread of life.***" This bread is ours to eat by faith. Eternal life is ours in Christ. Nothing can rob us of it.

We often feel threatened by so many things: aging, health concerns, hostility, antagonism (from the world around us and the people in it), weakness, brokenness, failure, and regret. More than anything else, we need to feed on Jesus in faith.

When we feed on Jesus in faith, we live eternally. We live and die in the same confidence and assurance as the dying man and his family in the story with which we began. We know where we'll be found. In Jesus' name. Amen