



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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August 20, 2006
11th Sunday after Pentecost
John 6:24-35
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Exodus 16:2-15
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 145
Second Lesson: Ephesians 4:17-24
Gospel: John 6:24-35

Feast on Food that Endures

How many of you enjoy grocery shopping? Do you look forward to it and can't wait until you get in that aisle and start pushing that cart up and down and throwing stuff in it?—things that you need and things that you think, "Hey, that looks good" and you get home and you don't like it. Do you look forward to it?—or, if someone said to you, "Hey, I have a way that you could shop once and it will last you the rest of your life. The food will never spoil. It will never rot. It will never perish. It will be there all through the rest of time. You will never have to set foot in a grocery store again." Would you take him up on the offer?

In a lot of areas of life we are looking for things that don't perish, spoil or fade, right? You walk into Barnes & Noble and get into the self-help section or the health section—don't you find all kinds of titles that say "Ten Years Longer," "Ten Years Younger," "Thirty Days to Looking Ten Years Younger." Have you ever stood in front of those book shelves, looked at those titles and thought you should turn to your teenager and say, "Here, take this home and read it so you can look like you are acting"?

We are looking a lot of times in our life for things that just aren't going to perish or spoil or fade. We are looking for things that are going to endure. We want to hang on to some of those things. We don't like to see the effects of living in a sinful world. There are things that fade away, things that rot, and things that spoil.

In the Words I just read to you from John, you see a bunch of people that got kind of excited because they heard about food that is not going to spoil. So they said, "Give us this food. This is what we are looking for." The problem was that they didn't understand the food that Jesus was talking about. Then when he explained it to them, they accused him of being the problem—"If only you would do the right miracle to show us, then we would believe you." They point the finger everywhere and just fail to understand what Jesus is talking about.

As we consider these Words that the Holy Spirit had John write, God encourages us to feast on food that endures. As we look at these Words and see the setting in which they took place, the fuss over a miracle soon fades. The fusses over the things of this life are soon going to fade. That is what our God is trying to teach us. The Bread of Life, that is what endures—faith in Christ as Savior—that is what endures and that is what God is telling us to feast upon.

In the beginning it talks about when they realized that Jesus and his disciples were no longer there, they went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. This is taking place right after the feeding of the 5000. When Jesus says “you are only here because you ate and had your bellies full,” he is talking about the feeding of the 5000. Jesus had fed 5000 men, not counting the women and children, with the five loaves of bread and the two fish. Then there were twelve basketfuls left over. These people were pretty tickled. They liked this kind of person and they wanted to take and make Jesus their king by force because he could meet their physical needs and that is what they wanted. Any guy that had this kind of power would always keep them full and anyone that has this kind of power is probably going to be able to get rid of the Romans. So they are pretty excited.

But we are told that Jesus sent his disciples off ahead of him and then Jesus himself later caught up to the disciples out on the water that night, walked on the water out to them, and came to the other side. So when they get there, you notice they ask this question. They had probably seen the disciples leave. They hadn't seen Jesus leave. So they ask Jesus, "*Rabbi, when did you get here?*" (John 6:25). It is kind of interesting that they call him "Rabbi," which means teacher, and then they are not going to listen to a word that he says after that. They don't listen to a thing he teaches. They challenge everything he teaches. And from this point on, many people turned away from him because of what he teaches in the Bread of Life discourse. They couldn't handle it. They call him teacher and then don't want to be taught. Just like you and I call God "Lord" and "Savior"—we are more than happy to have him be our Savior, that means he has taken away our sin, but to be our Lord where he is going to be in charge of every aspect of our lives, not just the parts where we are comfortable with him being in charge? Sometimes we will call him Lord, but we don't really want him to be Lord. It's not a whole lot different from these guys.

Did you notice that Jesus never answered the question that they asked? They asked Jesus, "When did you get here?" Did you notice his answer? He doesn't tell them a time. He doesn't tell them how. He doesn't answer their questions for more miracles. He simply says, "*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*" (John 6:26). Not looking for miraculous signs—the word that Jesus uses there for sign is a word that depicts something that would mark it as genuine so to speak, and in this case, mark it as something that comes from God. The same word is used as if a governor would send a message to someone else and he would put his sign on it. He might put some wax on it and then put his seal on it to mark it as belonging to him—don't open it under force of penalty and all those kinds of things. That would be his sign to say don't mess with this.

Jesus had fed the 5000. It was a miraculous sign. At that same time, he had healed people. His compassion went out to them. He took care of their physical needs. That was a miraculous sign sent to indicate that he was true God. He was the Son of God and the Son of Man who would come to be the Messiah that God had promised. That's what it was done for—to be a sign to them.

But they didn't listen to it. He said, "You aren't here because you saw me fulfill scripture." He knew what was in their hearts. "You are only here because you saw

some miracles and you want your belly full again. You are not here because you believe in me. You are not here because scripture has been opened to your minds through the Holy Spirit. You are here because something unusual happened and you want to see more.”

So then Jesus starts teaching them. He says, *“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”* (John 6:27). This is what Jesus had just been talking about. He is busy teaching them. He is busy connecting all the dots and drawing the picture for them so that they should be able to see it, but do you notice what they say next? They hear Jesus say, “Don’t work for” and they immediately say, “Then what is the work that God requires?” They were so conditioned to think about work righteousness, so conditioned to think about having to do something, you have to avoid doing this or that or offer this sacrifice or that sacrifice to be right with God that, “Okay, you are a great Rabbi. You are a great teacher. You are talking about things that last to eternal life. It must be something that we have to do. That is how you get right with God—what you do. What works must we do?”

We know we aren’t saved by our works, but sometimes you and I want to give our works a lot more credit than they are really worth. We want to think God loves us more than other people because we do things for God and others don’t. We want to think God loves us more than others because we come to church more often, we read our Bible more often and we do this so God must love us more. What we are sometimes led by Satan to forget is that these works are not ours. Did you notice what Jesus said? When they asked him, “What works must we do?”—look at the answer. Who is he saying is doing the work? *“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent”* (John 6:29). He is saying it isn’t your work. You can’t do anything to get to eternal life. You can’t believe on your own. You can’t even do that. That is not the one last work you have to do and then you are forgiven. He says, *“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent”* (John 6:29).

It is God’s work that works faith in our hearts. Sometimes that is hard for us to understand. We want to take some credit. We want to pat ourselves on the back for something we have done. It’s why a lot of people within the Christian church even yet today reject what you saw happen this morning. They reject that baptism works faith in the heart of an infant because they say that infant can’t make a decision for Christ. But if it is the work of God, God can do it in a little infant just as certainly as he can do it in you or me because by nature we are all born spiritually blind, spiritually dead, and enemies of God. It is God’s work. Jesus lays it out real clearly. He says, “Don’t look in the mirror for the source of your forgiveness. Look to the work of God.”

But now again, here is where the people have a problem, right? They say, “This is a different teaching. We are not used to this. I am not used to thinking this way. So now you tell me what sign or miracle you are going to do so that we can believe this. You took some food that was already here and fed a lot of us. That’s nice, but Moses, he did something special. He had bread come down from heaven. He had it come appear out of nothing. You just made food stretch. You just added some bread crumbs and stretched it out a little farther. You didn’t really do anything all that great. Do something

more impressive, and then maybe we will believe the work of God is to believe in the One he has sent.” They just couldn’t get off of what they were so accustomed to and what they were so used to.

Don’t you wonder if sometimes we are that way? We are so used to the things of this world. We are focused on the things of this world. They were focused on bread. They were focused on food. They were focused on what Jesus could do for their bodies, right then and right there. Do we at times get so used to thinking about things that are from this world that we kind of shove God in the background? Do we find ourselves so busy with daily life, with things that we have invested our time and energy and money in, that now we have made this commitment to it so we have got to make use of it? Whether it is the toys we buy or the recreation we can afford ourselves so that we say, “God you are going to have to wait. I can’t make it this week. I can’t make it next week. I am going to be gone then. I don’t have time for family devotions. We can’t even get the family around the table let alone have family devotions. And read the Bible on my own God? By the time I have time to sit down and do that, I am falling asleep. I don’t have time for that. I have more important things to do, God.” Would any of us here really say that to God—look him in the face and say, “I have more important things to do”?

But do we say it in our actions? I have to believe every one of us here this morning at times gets so caught up in the things that have to do with the body, with our daily life, with what we need to do to live and enjoy life as we see it and as we think of it that God gets pushed aside. I have to believe that it happens to each and every one of us.

Here is what the amazing thing about our God is—he sees all the times that we put ourselves ahead of him and yet he still loves us. He still comes to us through water, through the Word, through bread and through wine and says, “You have messed up again, but I have taken away your sins through my life and through my death. I love you and your foolishness, your sinfulness, your poor choices—your sins aren’t going to change that.” That is the kind of God that we have. And that is why, as Christians, we want to be transformed by him and take our attention off of the things of this world, the things that are going to perish, spoil and fade, the things that aren’t going to endure and say, “God, you are the best thing I have. You are the most important thing that I have. And as I face things in this world that challenge me, frighten me, scare me or terrify me because I am living in this sinful world, Lord, I know that you are going to help me through it.” We are going to be better equipped to face those things if we spend our life getting to know God better, growing in our knowledge of him instead of when trouble comes all of a sudden throwing our arms up in the air and saying, “God, help me!”, and not knowing even really what to turn to or where to go. God will still help us in those times, but until we figure out what God is going to do and how he does it, we are going to have a lot of fear and a lot of anxiety and a lot of acid burning through the lining of our stomach that wouldn’t have had to be as great if we had walked closer to God and believed in the One he had sent.

Again Jesus takes the question, “What miraculous sign can you do?”—he takes their accusation, which is really what it is. If someone gets in your face and accuses you of being the one that is causing the problem, it is your fault, don’t you immediately get your hackles up and you don’t want to talk to that person and you want to start pointing the

finger at them and say, “But you did this” or “You did that”?—look at how Jesus does it. They get in his face and say, “It’s your fault that we don’t believe because you haven’t done the right miraculous sign to convince us.” He just answers them flat out and says, “It wasn’t Moses that did it. It was the Father.” He answers them flat out and tries to point them once again lovingly away from their misconceptions and back to the truth of God. He says, “Moses didn’t give you the bread from heaven. My Father gave you the true bread from heaven. *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world*” (John 6:33).

Here he is getting pretty clear. The bread of life is “he who comes down from heaven.” It is a person. But notice that they are still caught on this stuff that it doesn’t fade. It endures. It doesn’t perish. It doesn’t spoil. They say, “*from now on give us this bread*” (John 6:34). This sounds like a good deal. Again, they have missed it. The bread of life is “he” and then in case they still don’t get it he says, “*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*” (John 6:35). He is not talking about physical hunger or physical thirst. He is talking about spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst. All the troubles that we face in life are because we live in a sin filled world. The answer to sin is always Jesus Christ and how he lived and died to take away our sins. The way to deal with the problems that make us worry and fret is to walk with Christ at our side and put our trust in him—the One who loved us enough to live and die in our place is the One who loves us enough to help us through these things. This is the central truth that God has taught us over and over and over again. He says, “Don’t get so hung up on the things of this world. Walk by faith, not by sight.” But you and I often just get tripped up in walking by sight. We are so focused on what we can see that we think those are the most important things in this world.

The reality is that the most important thing even in this world is being close to our Savior—knowing that he loves us, knowing that he has given us eternal life and knowing that he promises to help us through those things that challenge us. Once we understand that truth, God sets us free from worry so that we can live trusting him. We won’t always do it perfectly, but God forgives us and his forgiveness strengthens us and motivates us to want to get better at it time and time and time again.

The Bread of Life—it is the feast that God gives us and he gives it to us again and again and again in the Word and in the Sacraments.