

NEW BEGINNINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost – August 4th, 2024 (11:11 am)

THE BREAD OF LIFE

Psalm 145:10–21

Ex. 16:2–15

Eph. 4:1–16

John 6:22–35

Jesus Is the True and Living Bread from Heaven

Having rescued Israel “out of the land of Egypt” (Ex. 16:6), the Lord manifested His glory and made Himself known to His people. He fed them with “meat to eat” in the evening and with “bread from heaven” in the morning (Ex. 16:4, 8, 12). But now, the “true bread from heaven,” which the Father gives to you, is the Son, “who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6:32–33). Whoever comes to Him “shall not hunger,” and whoever believes in Him “shall never thirst.” He is “the bread of life,” who gives Himself to you as “the food that endures to eternal life” (John 6:27, 35). By the gracious working of God, you believe in Him by the calling of one Spirit through the Gospel, so that you also have “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:4–6). As you eat His one body in the Holy Supper, so you belong to the one Body of His Church, in which you “are to grow up in every way into him who is the head” (Eph. 4:15).

Research showed that a human being eats about 16 times its own weight in one year. A horse takes in only 8 times its weight. So, if you want to lose weight you have to eat like a horse.

- Speaking of weight loss, is this the case today for many people to say in the Lord’s Prayer: “Give us NOT this day our daily bread”. Food is so plentifully available in our reality here that we can afford not to eat, even when there’s so much food available.

- That brings us also to eating disorders like Anorexia, or Bulimia. *And one is left wondering: what leads a human being to be afraid to eat, and avoid it altogether? Can this type of disorder reach also spiritual life? Bible Anorexia, Bible bulimia?*

FOOD. THE FOOD WE NEED. In the Gospel today, this subject surfaces again, now when we hear about **the Bread of Life**. A bread which is **“he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”**

A bread that comes down from Heaven? What is it connected to?

THE TEXT

The text implies the multiplication of the loaves. It is a talk about bread. Jesus people food for the body. Now He bridges it to the food for the soul.

Jesus turns their attention from the **loaf of bread to the bread of life**. He knew they were after an earthly king which, among many things, could make food appear. Talk about a perfect fit for the throne!

Jesus says he is the bread of life that came down from heaven. “I am”. One of the “I am” that Jesus says. **He is the Bread of Life**, but He *gives* the Water of life.¹

¹ _Ways in which we also question the bread that came from Heaven: “

He is the food that literally came from heaven to sustain us not only for 40 years, but for eternity. *“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.”*

Which works? ***“That you believe in him whom he has sent”.***

And then they ask for a sign. Compare with the manna.

The Manna was the food sent literally from heaven that sustained the People of God in the desert for 40 years.

Jesus is the Bread of life that sustains us not only for 40 days or 40 years, but for eternity.

What are the signs we demand from God to Work for the food that endures, that is, to with more confidence take Jesus seriously and believe in Him?

Perhaps that’s one of the reasons Jesus is not taken seriously is because of that saying, **“there is no such thing as free meal”.** “Things falling from heaven from free? That’s scam, the long con someone is trying to play on you. Nothing is for free. You have to do your part if you want to please God, have his blessings and deserve somehow to be with Him”. But that’s exactly what the Father did. He sent His Son, the Bread of life.

Why “Bread of Life”? Perhaps because there’s a breath of death surrounding our meal tables.

- The devil and the World.
- Challenges to our faith.
- When we feel we are spiritually starving, it may be because we are eating right or wrong.
- Fast spiritual food.

FEAST OF FOOD

What’s the adequate way to feed our souls? What types of “drive-throughs” have we been going to trying to satisfy our pain, and our spiritual wants?

- *Fast food* – It has been around for quite a long time now, and it is a type of food that may feed you. You can get by somehow by only eating it. But we have been learning that this is not the adequate way to feed our bodies.
- Perhaps here too we resort to fast food to trying to satisfy our hearts.
- Christ doesn’t offer us fast food. He offers a feast of **Food**. From the Gospel of John, we learn that this feast has one main dish: BREAD. The Bread of Life, that satiates, relieves, strengthens and sustains.

-When we try to solve everything and give our lives direction with our own capacity;

-When God is not the center of our lives, but that helper that I can resort to just in case;

_Especially, when we fail to recognize that Jesus, and only Him, is the bread of life. When we try to satisfy our soul with different types of food that do not have the ingredients that the Bread of life has to nurture our souls.

As we heard previously: Life is short. But it can be shorter if you eat unhealthy food. Spiritual life is short as well if you eat the wrong food.²

When you EAT the bread of life, CHRIST then YOU KNOW your soul is being fed, your life is being nurtured. Even your emotional health is being nourished, because you know you can latch your feelings on to what you KNOW and have LEARNED from the word of God. **He came down from Heaven to be our Bread of life.**

Quote:

***“Every boy wants to be a man.
Every man wants to be a king.
Every king wants to be a God.
Only God wanted to be a boy.”***

Jesus came down from Heaven to come to us. Not only in Word and Sacraments here in the Divine Service, but every single day of our lives giving meaning to our life and direction to our steps.

We’ve been talking about the food we need, now perhaps a last question could be: “How much of it should I have and eat, or take with me?”

Sometimes Silvana and I like to watch YouTube Travels. And a couple did a big, huge trip. On their motorhome, they set to travel across the Americas, South to North. They started their trip off in Ushuaia, Argentina, the southernmost point in the Americas, and finished it in Northern Alaska. Almost 15,000 km, or 9,000 miles. *Now, how much food did they take with them for that road trip? 5 loaves and 2 fish? Well, unless Jesus literally travelled with them, I don’t think that would be enough.* They had to have a full pantry right off the bat. But you would add, they surely had also many pit stops along the road to refuel and to reload the pantry, and that’s correct.

Now think of your life. You’ve been travelling from the deep end of sin, brought into God’s Faith home and is travelling to up north figuratively speaking – Heaven. *How does that trip look like? Do we think we can make it without a full pantry? Or even without Sunday and daily pit stops for refueling and nourishment?* I don’t think so. **We need food for the long travel. We need constantly to be nourished by the one who is present with us on that trip, multiplying our food for faith, bringing the Bread of life that will make us not to be hungry anymore.**

Yes, we can eat like a horse, the Word of God is a never-ending source of energy and nourishment for our life. We should never be afraid of eating, that is, we can avoid developing a sort of Bible Anorexia or Bulimia.

The Bread of life feeds our hearts abundantly, sustaining us in our road trip to Heaven. The Bread of Life. The food we need. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

² “_” But Pastor, you say the Bread of Life satisfies us. But I don’t always feel like that. How do I know that I can feel satisfied?” Yes, sometimes we feel like we live in the Empire of Senses. Almost everything seems to be a matter of feeling. It has even hit our daily way of speaking. “ I feel like...”, or “ I have a feeling that...” even when no feelings are implied in the subject at all. In a way that we don’t even question it anymore.

_You can’t always feel. But you can always KNOW. If your body’s nourishment depended on the way you feel about it, how well fed would you be? However when you eat bread, you know your body is going to be nurtured.