

#1787

Cf. #303 #731 #969 #1020 # 1172 #1334 #1507

John 6:22-35¹

Jesus is the Bread of Life.

11th Sunday after Pentecost

Supplementary Lectionary Series “B,”

Gospels, adapted

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Grace WELS Durand MI

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Shiawassee County Fair:

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²² The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake² realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone.³ ²³ Then some boats from Tiberias⁴ landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the LORD had given thanks. ²⁴ Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum⁵ in search of Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake,⁶ they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “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.⁷ ²⁷ 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.”⁸

²⁸ Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: To believe in the One he has sent.”

³⁰ So they asked him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’” (cf. Exodus 16:4ff; Psalm 78:24).

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

² The eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus had fed the 5,000.

³ Later, Jesus had joined his disciples by walking on water out to their boat, after taking Jesus into their boat, they immediately landed on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

⁴ The City of Tiberias was located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee was also known as the Sea of Tiberias.

⁵ Capernaum was located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee and served as Jesus’ headquarters during his Galilean ministry. It is indicated in 6:59 that Jesus was speaking to the crowd “while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.”

⁶ That is, on the western side of the Sea of Galilee in the synagogue.

⁷ With five loaves of barley bread and two small fish, Jesus had fed a crowd of 5,000 “men” (6:10b; cf. Matthew 14:21; Mark 6:44; Luke 9:14) – not including women and children. The total crowd then was probably closer to being ten to fifteen thousand or more!

⁸ Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; John 5:22,23; Romans 1:1-4; Ephesians 1:20.

³² Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the True Bread from heaven. ³³ For the Bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.”

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, “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.”

JESUS DECLARES: “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!”

- I. GIVEN BY GOD THE FATHER
- II. GRASPED BY FAITH
- III. GRANTING ETERNAL LIFE

In the Name of Jesus, who is our Bread of Life, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

Our text this morning deals with the first of seven of Jesus’ “I Am” statements. This morning’s statement is: “I Am the Bread of Life” (6:35a). Jesus will also declare, “I Am the Light of the World” (8:12; 9:5); “I Am the Gate for the Sheep” (10:7,9); “I Am the Good Shepherd” (10:11,14); “I Am the Resurrection and the Life” (11:25a); “I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life” (14:6a); “I Am the Vine” (15:1,5). Jesus will state an eighth time in John 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I Am.” All of these “I Am” statements of Jesus are solemnly emphatic and echo God’s revelation of himself in Exodus 3:14a, “I AM WHO I AM!” (Hebrew: **hy<h]a, rv, a} hy<h]a⁹**). This revelation of God was later translated as the word “LORD” in all capital letters – a reference to the God of grace – the God who forgives those who do not deserve his forgiveness – the LORD is the God of free and faithful grace – undeserved love. Thus, in all of these “I Am” references, Jesus is indicating that the only way to have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation is through him – through faith in him alone as one’s Savior.

This morning, we have the privilege of hearing and examining the first of Jesus’ “I Am” statements. JESUS DECLARES: “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!” Jesus is “THE BREAD OF LIFE!” I. GIVEN BY GOD THE FATHER; II. GRASPED BY FAITH; and, III. GRANTING ETERNAL LIFE.

JESUS DECLARES: “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!”

- I. GIVEN BY GOD THE FATHER

A crowd of more than five thousand had followed Jesus to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee – also known as the Sea of Tiberias. They had seen Jesus’ miracles of healing and heard his preaching. Jesus fed this crowd of more than five thousand (cf. 6:10b; cf.

⁹ Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1990.

Matthew 14:21; Mark 6:44; Luke 9:14) with five loaves of barley bread and two small fish (6:9). As a result, the crowd wanted to take Jesus by force and make him their King (6:15) – their Bread King.

Jesus, however, dismissed the crowd and had gone into the hills by himself to pray. Jesus' disciples embarked in a boat and headed to the western side of the Sea of Galilee, toward Capernaum. They had run into a contrary wind and had not gone very far, when Jesus came out to them walking on the water. Jesus' disciples took him into their boat, and immediately they reached the western shore (6:16-21). The people followed Jesus.

Our text states,

²² The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. ²³ Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the LORD had given thanks. ²⁴ Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" (6:22-25).

The crowd had no idea that Jesus had walked across the water to join his disciples.

The crowd was looking for Jesus, and Jesus identifies the reason they were looking for him.

²⁶ Jesus answered [the crowd], "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. ²⁷ 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" (6:26,27).

The crowd wanted Jesus to take care of their earthly, physical, bodily needs. They wanted a "Bread King." But, Jesus, the Son of Man, the Messiah, had the food or bread that would give them eternal life. Jesus himself was that bread – "the Bread of Life." Jesus' Father, true God, had "placed his seal of approval" on his Son as "the Bread of Life," and would continue to give his approval to his Son.

At his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptizer, the heavenly Father spoke his approval from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). The Father would say similar words of approval at Jesus' transfiguration (cf. Matthew 17:5; Luke 9:35; Mark 9:7). The Father would continue to reveal his approval of his Son by raising him from the dead on the third day after Jesus' death by crucifixion (cf. Romans 1:1-4); the Father would reveal his approval by seating Jesus at his right hand in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1:20); and by conveying all

judgment to his Son Jesus (5:22,23). But the Jews, the crowd, were not satisfied with Jesus' miracles of healing and feeding them. They want more.

³⁰ So [the crowd] asked [Jesus], "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" (6:30,31; cf. Exodus 16:4; Psalm 78:24).

The crowd compared Jesus to Moses. It was through Moses that God led Israel in the wilderness for forty years. During that time, Israel received "bread from heaven to eat."

This bread they called "manna" [Hebrew, **אֲמָן**; ¹⁰ (man-who), "What is it?" (Exodus 16:15)] The crowd credited Moses with this forty-year miracle, but Jesus sets them straight.

³² Jesus said to [the crowd], "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the True Bread from heaven. ³³ For the Bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (6:32,33).

Moses was God's chosen servant to lead Israel in the wilderness. But it was God who provided Israel with the bread from heaven – manna. That manna was physical food. But manna did not last and neither did the people. Even though the people ate this manna – this food from heaven – they still died. Now the Father was giving to people the True Bread from heaven. The Father was giving the people his One and Only Son, Jesus (cf. 3:16). Jesus is the Bread of God. Jesus is "The Bread of Life." Jesus was sent down from heaven by God the Father to give life to the world.

APPROPRIATION

Like the Jews of Jesus' day, we are tempted to be concerned more about physical, earthly food and "things," rather than spiritual things. We are concerned about our homes and families. We are concerned about the money we have or do not have. We want to have time for recreation, relaxation and repose. But neither our homes nor our families nor our money nor any other worldly thing lasts. Neither do we, for we soon die and fade away (cf. Psalm 90; Isaiah 40:6-8a; 1 Peter 1:24). But Jesus was sent into the world to give life to the world – to give life to you and to me.

God reveals his grace to you and to me – his undeserved love – by sending his Son, Jesus, into the world to be our Savior. This is all God's doing as is expressed in the Gospel in a Nutshell, John 3:16. Note also in these verses that follow John 3:16, that it is faith in Jesus that benefits from God's sending his Son into the world.

Jesus said,

¹⁰ Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1990.

16 “ ... God so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the Name of God’s One and Only Son” (3:16-18).

These verses are summarized in the words of John 3:36, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

So it is with you and me. Jesus is “the Bread of Life” sent down from heaven by God the Father. In order to benefit from what Jesus has done, it is necessary to believe in Jesus.

JESUS DECLARES: “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!”
I. GIVEN BY GOD THE FATHER; and,
II. GRASPED BY FAITH

The crowd asked Jesus, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” (6:28). Their question reveals their misunderstanding. “What must we do ...?” In reality, they could do nothing. They could do nothing, but, on the other hand, Jesus reveals that God must do everything.

“Jesus answered [the crowd], ‘The work of God is this: To believe in the One he has sent’” (6:29). Note well Jesus’ answer. “The work of God is this” – God’s work is to believe in Jesus, the one whom God sent into the world. Of themselves, neither this crowd nor anyone else could bring themselves to believe in Jesus. They could not decide for Christ; they could not decide to believe in Jesus. Dr. Martin Luther captures this thought in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed.

Luther writes, “I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my LORD, or come to him.”¹¹ Jesus said the same thing: “You did not choose me but I chose you” (15:16a). It is the Holy Spirit who calls people to faith – who creates faith in Jesus in the hearts of people. The Holy Spirit does this through the Gospel – the Good News about Jesus. Thus, St. Paul wrote to the Romans, “Faith comes from hearing the Message, and the Message is heard through the Word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). The “Word of Christ,” the Word about Jesus – the Message of the Gospel.

APPROPRIATION

¹¹ Kuske, David P., *LUTHER’S CATECHISM – The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and an Exposition for Children and Adults Written in Contemporary English* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 3rd ed, 1998), pp. 5, 181.

Jesus is “the Bread of Life,” but neither you nor I nor anyone else can believe in Jesus by our own thinking or reason or strength or ability. We cannot decide for Christ. Faith in Jesus is a miracle – a miracle that God works.

Faith in Jesus is a miracle. St. Paul reveals this truth when he writes to the Ephesians, “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4,5). St. Paul wrote the same thing to the Colossians: “When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins” (Colossians 2:13a,c). Thus, St. Paul describes the miracle of faith as a “quickenings”; that is, being brought from death to life – from spiritual death to spiritual life.

All people, including you and me, are by nature spiritually dead – “dead in transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2:1b). But in his rich mercy, God makes us alive with Christ – God creates faith in Jesus in our hearts. God does this by sending to us the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has come to us – has come to our hearts – through the Gospel in Word and Sacraments (Holy Baptism and Holy Communion). That is how faith in Jesus has been created in our hearts. That is how faith in Jesus is sustained in our hearts. The Gospel or Good News about Jesus, is the Means of Grace – the means by which God gets his grace from himself to us – into our hearts. This faith in Jesus grasps and believes that Jesus is “the Bread of Life” – that Jesus is our “Bread of Life.” Jesus is the only way in which we have forgiveness of sins and salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). Through Jesus alone, we have eternal life in heaven (John 10:10; 20:31).

JESUS DECLARES: “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!” III. GRANTING ETERNAL LIFE

Eternal life is emphasized in our text. Jesus says, “I Am the Bread of Life” (6:35a). The crowd does not understand that about which Jesus is speaking. They think Jesus is talking about physical bread – earthly food.

Jesus says,

³² “ ... it is my Father who gives you the True Bread from heaven. ³³ For the Bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ “Sir,” [the crowd] said, “from now on give us this bread” (6:32b–34).

Still the crowd does not comprehend. Jesus, the Bread of Life, is standing before them. They are thinking about physical bread – physical food. If Jesus would give them that, then they think they would never have to work or worry again. The reality is they still would die. Physical bread cannot sustain them forever. Jesus, the Bread of Life, however, can and does sustain life forever.

Jesus, the Bread of Life, gives eternal life. Thus, Jesus tells the crowd, “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” (6:35). Never to be hungry and never to be thirsty is not a reality in this life or in this world. Jesus is speaking about the eternal life that he gives to those who believe in him as their LORD and Savior.

Never to hunger or thirst is a reality for believers in Jesus. The Book of Revelation declares this clearly. John hears the proclamation concerning believers in heaven, “Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst” (7:16a). Again, John records in the Book of Revelation that God “will wipe every tear from [believers] eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4). This is the eternal life that Jesus, “the Bread of Life,” gives to those who believe in him.

APPROPRIATION

This eternal life is yours now. The enjoyment of this eternal life is yours forever in heaven. Never to be hungry again; never to be thirsty again; never to have any more tears, or pain, or sorrow, or distress; never to have any more death – that is not a description of what we have in this life on this earth. It is, however, a description of what our heavenly Father has given to you and to me through his Son, Jesus. It is only faith in Jesus that grants this eternal life to us.

We dare not ask as did the Jews, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” (6:28). God demands perfection, righteousness and holiness (cf. Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48). You and I cannot provide that. God, however, has provided that perfection, righteousness and holiness, in his Son, Jesus (cf. Romans 3:21,22; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By Spirit-wrought faith in Jesus – faith that is created in us through the Gospel (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14) – the righteousness and perfection of Jesus is credited to us. The result is eternal life – eternal life by faith alone in Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Hunger, thirst, sadness, death and mourning will continue yet for a little while for us on this earth and in this life. But by faith in Jesus, “the Bread of Life,” we look forward to an eternity in the bliss of heaven with Jesus. We grasp this eternal life by faith alone in Jesus – a faith created, strengthened and continued by the work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel. Continue, then, in the Gospel of Jesus in order to have Jesus as your “Bread of Life” in eternity. Amen.