

# The Bread of Life

## August 4, 2024

**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church      Pastor John Scott**

Continuing our sermon series called *Journey with Jesus*. We have been walking through the book of Mark all summer long. Today, we are switching to John because today we are going to talk about Jesus saying that He is the *Bread of Life*.

We had three really long readings today. But they are foundational readings. They are foundational stories to understanding who God is and who we are and who He has called us to be. We had the story of God giving His people the manna in Exodus 16:2-15, the quail and the manna when they were going around in the wilderness and had nothing to eat, and they had just been saved by God. They had been brought out of slavery into freedom, yet they start complaining. They start complaining. Do you know anybody like this? Everything can be going right in the world, and yet there is something to complain about. And the problem is, we all know somebody like that because it is me, and you, and us, and all of us.

The second reading was from Paul, Ephesians 4:1-16. And what Paul talks about in Ephesians here is that what God does with His people, when He calls people together through Jesus, He gives them gifts, and skills, and ways to serve one another through which people see Him more clearly, through which they will be fed with things that will satisfy them, not just for the moment but for eternal life.

And so, we go back to John now. In John 6:22-35, we hear the story of Jesus walking along, teaching people, helping them understand what He is going to do for them. And Jesus says this, "I am the bread of life." What does that mean? How does He get there? Well, that is why we are reading through each of these sections this summer, because the way he gets there is important.

Because the crowds are going to ask Jesus three questions. They are questions that you have all asked as well. And Jesus answers each one of

them in turn. So, let us pay attention as we hear Jesus answer these questions.

In John 6:22, the disciples had gone away alone. Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So, when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there and His disciples were not there, they themselves got into boats and went off to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

This follows directly as we read last week when Jesus walked on water to the disciples while they were on that boat. The disciples went out into the lake on their own in that boat, and Jesus stayed back on the shore. He taught the people, and it was wonderful. And in the middle of the night, Jesus walks out onto the lake. So, the people did not know. They get up the next morning and find that Jesus is gone, the disciples are gone, but only one boat went out, and Jesus was with them.

How did He do this? What do you think they were thinking? What were they thinking about this man who had just broken a couple of loaves of bread and some fish and fed thousands of people? What do you think they were thinking about this guy who had raised people from the dead, so they heard? What were they thinking? Some of the questions they might be thinking are ones that you may have asked about Jesus too—how did He do all these things? How could it be possible? Can we prove it? Can Jesus prove it? The crowds were asking all the same things that we do about Jesus, about the faith that has come after Jesus, the faith that is in Jesus, about what our friends and our family believe. We have asked these questions. What are the answers? Let's follow along. John's gospel is different than Mark and Matthew and Luke in that John wants to give you answers to those questions. He's writing this gospel, telling the story of Jesus again in a different way than the rest of them, so that you would believe that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the Son of God, and that through Him you have life. This is what John wants you to see. So, let's see how he does this.

The first question is right here in verse 25ff:

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered

them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> 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.”

The question they ask is this— *Rabbi, when did you come here?* Now, do you think this is the real question they were asking? Did they really care when He got to the other side? Like at three o’clock in the morning or six o’clock in the morning or night? Did He have an appointment to make? Was He late? Did they really care *when*? What were they really asking? They were asking *how*—*How* did you do this? *How* did you do this incredible thing that we could not do? It took us forever to get to the other side of the lake. *How* did you get here already? And once they realized that He had got there, I bet they started asking this question—*Who* are you really? How could *you* do this? *Who must you be* if this is real? And seeing with their own eyes, they knew this was real. They just could not figure out how it happened or who He is.

Jesus gives them an answer to this question. He says this: you are following me because I fed you. Like we said last week, many of us will do a whole lot of things for free food. I helped many of my friends move houses when I was in my 20s for free food. Not anymore. That is not enticing enough, not enough to make that happen. But for free food, we will do a whole lot of stuff. But Jesus says, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life” (v. 27a). How do we get that? What does Jesus say we have to do?

Nothing. He says, “the Son of Man will give it to you.” For the things that matter, for the things that will last into eternity, the Son of Man, Jesus, the one who has been promised, will give it to you. That sounds good, right? Today, living on this side of Easter, we know that that is what Jesus has done for us, that He died, that He rose again, and He gives us eternal life. Through faith in Him, by trusting in Him, by saying “He is the Messiah,” by believing in Him, we are gifted eternal life.

So, this should be over. I should be able to close this book and we should be done. But that is not what happens because that is not what happens in our lives either.

Because we often get kind of distracted. We start to think, “There must be more to it than that. There has got to be something else.” And so, they ask another question. In verse 28ff, they ask Him the second question: “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.””

It is a fair question. *What must we do to be doing the things that God demands of us, that God wants us to do?* They knew the story of their ancestors in the wilderness when they complained to the Lord and how God provided for them and asked them to keep doing the things that He has called them to do. And so they asked, “Well, okay, you are going to give us this great bread that is going to endure throughout all of time. How do we get it? What do we have to do?” And again, what kind of question are they asking? They are asking the *how* question.

In your life, when you have had times wondering where God is, or trying to figure out what God is all about, how often did you go to the *how* question? God, *how* could you do this? God, *how* can I make this better? God, *how* can I feel your presence in my life, with me now? How many times do we go to that *how* question?

We go to that question all the time. This is not unusual. It is not strange for the crowds to be doing this because we do this too. Jesus’ answer to them points them back to the *who* question. When we want to ask *how*, Jesus reminds us to ask *who*. *Who*. Because when we ask *who*, it points our eyes back to Him, back to who Jesus is, who He has promised that He is, and who He has proven Himself to be, that God said He would send a Messiah to save the world, and He did send a Messiah. And Jesus did die for you, and all of those mistakes and sins that you have made that you feel guilty for right now, He died for them. And in the empty tomb, He was alive. We know that He was alive, and in that life, He gives you freedom. He gives you freedom from all of the guilt and all of the shame that you feel over the things that you have done wrong. And when we confess those sins each and every day, and you hear that you are forgiven, you are truly and 100 percent completely forgiven. All of those things are gone, and you can leave them behind.

When we want to ask the *how* question, like *how do we help God love us*, we forget that He is the God who already loves us so fully and so

unfailingly that He gave His Son to die for us, and then rose Him from the dead to give us life today and forever. Turn the *how* question into the *who* question because when we do, we see what Jesus says. He says, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (v. 29b). The only work there is the work of the Spirit in you, pointing you back to Jesus to trust in Him.

A lot of times we talk about this as the paradox. We often think of what we have to do to be connected with God, but the reality is there is nothing. It is the weirdest thing to get something so incredibly, eternally full and wonderful, and to do nothing to obtain it. It feels wrong. It just feels like we should have to do something. It is like when you go somewhere, like somebody’s house for a dinner party, what do you do? You typically bring them something. It feels weird not to have this exchange of gifts. Or say, you are on a long road trip, you need to stop at a gas station or a rest area somewhere, use the restroom, and buy something on your way out. It is an exchange.

This paradox, this weird thing is like, *I am given something, and I do not have to do anything in return*. It just feels weird. And I think that is the point. It is strange; it is odd, so that you will look to the God who loves you with awe, with reverence, with thankfulness, with gratefulness at this gift that you have been given and understand the true place of works so that you understand why you do the things that you do, why it is good to do good things. Only after understanding that this gift is ours do we understand the place of what we do in this world. And Jesus is going to get to that right here in this next section.

Let’s see the last question that they ask Him, starting in verse 30ff:

<sup>30</sup> So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said 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.

It was the Lord. He gives you the true bread from heaven, for the bread of God is He who has come down from heaven and gives life to the whole of

creation. They say to Him, “We will take that, sir. Thank you. More, please.” And Jesus says, “You are there. I am the bread of life. I will give you bread that will never perish, that will never fade, and will feed you and sustain you throughout all of eternity.”

Jesus gives them this promise to sustain them because once they see that this gift is theirs, once they see eventually that Jesus will be crucified, once they see and hear the reports of Him being raised to new life, they will see and they will believe that He is the one that God sent, that He has made the world new, and that He is the one who has the power to bring heaven and earth together again. And when they do, their lives will be changed.

Their lives will be changed. Think about your life. Think about how much your life has changed knowing that life is yours in Jesus. You do not fear what comes after death, because you know that you will be with the Lord, and you know that He will make everything that is broken new again.

Like I told the kids during the children’s message, it kills me that bread hurts my body. I love bread. I love bread so much. I cannot wait for the day when I get to feast at the Lord’s table, and whatever that bread is, I cannot wait to enjoy that. Because He is going to make all things new. He is going to make everything that is broken whole again. He will make everything that is sad come untrue because He brings life. This is our hope, and this shows us the place of our works, of what we do, because our hope is secure, because our life is secure. We go and do good things in this world so that our neighbors will experience that as well, so that they will see Jesus clearly, so they will know how to answer that *how* question that we have with a *who*, so that they will know that they are loved greatly and dearly just like we.

This is what it means when Jesus says, *I am the bread of life*. I will give you something that is bigger and better and greater than anything that you can feed on today. I will give you what will nourish you throughout all of eternity.

And this bread is meant to be shared. That is our work. That is our mission. That is what Jesus calls each and every one of us to be doing every single day of our lives, showing others through what we say and what we do that He is the bread of life.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time in your word. We thank you for opening up this word to us that we might hear you in a new way, in a different way today, that our faith in you would be encouraged now with the questions that we have, we might get some answers, so that we can focus on you and see how you, Lord, are the one who brings us the blessings that we have, the gifts that we have, and in the sufferings and in the pain that we have, you bring us words of encouragement and words of healing.

Remind us where our hope is, that it is in you alone, and allow us to serve the people around us, to bless our neighbors, to do great things in your name, for your glory, that all would know that they are greatly and dearly loved by you.

All of this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.