**8/11/24**

**Writer’s Block, and Bread Again**

**John 6:35, 41-51 (NRSV)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Have any one of you out there in the pews, or on the conference call ever had writer’s block before? I can imagine that every one of you has probably had it a time or two in the past if you ever have had to write a paper for school or complete an assignment for work. With that being said, then I know for certain that you will agree with me and admit that it is not a very welcomed state of mind. Unfortunately, it manages to lead to a lot of frustration or even resentment, it leads to overthinking and overevaluation, and quite frankly it leads to us wanting to throw things in the air and often even wanting to give up. For some reason this week’s Gospel Reading brought about quite a bit of writer’s block, and all of those previously mentioned feelings for me. I initially was not too certain why that was, as the topics seemed to be rather straight forward, and honestly rather easy to grasp for the most part. I did not even feel that I was stuck in the very predicament that the Jews were in our Gospel Reading. So, I chalked it up to possibly having to talk about bread for another week. Then, as I thought a little more, I thought it just might be that it was because we have a lot of similar discourse that we had last week. Then, maybe it was just because we have stubborn people yet again not listening, or not able to widen their scope on things. So, then after reviewing all of this I pressed pause for a bit. I asked for some help from God. I quit trying to force or power through things on my own accord.

Following this pause it was actually then that I realized yet again that the Word is active, and that you and I play a critical part in it as well. Then, that is when it all actually clicked and I had an ah ha moment when I inserted myself into this very story. This is exactly when I came to terms with my writer’s block. Just maybe I am actually the one that needs to hear about bread in the physical form and in the Word version several times to remember and truly taste and see how good it is. Then, just maybe I did not want to get caught admitting that I am the one who needs things repeated to me several times and in several different manners before I can even hear or grasp it. Of course, just maybe it is because I am the one who is stubborn and grumbles while I refuse to listen and be open to thinking differently and outside the proverbial box. Those very points might be why I was struggling and uncomfortable with reviewing and studying this Gospel Reading, because it was actually pointing out my flaws. I am not going to say they are your flaws however, but I am pretty sure that we are on the same playing field here whether we want to admit it or not. Whatever the case might be, I knew I had to find a way to dig into this a little deeper for you and for I, and with that very effort I unfortunately had to get a little bit uncomfortable, or even be a little vulnerable.

It was in that very effort of digging in that I did actually find comfort in the very first verse we heard yet again today; for it was the same exact verse we ended with on last week’s Gospel Reading. We get total confirmation of who Jesus was, is, and will forever be; let alone what exactly his purpose was, is, and will forever be as well. With this one of many “I am” statements we hear we come to the actual realization that we are provided with clarity and comfort. He is telling the people back then, and all of us from then until now who he actually is, what his message and ministry were about, and why it would live on past them and us, and be forever.

However, just as easily as we start this week’s Gospel Reading, we then end it with a rather awkward and unusual statement if you think about it. Quite frankly I am not sure we fully grasp it today, and I am pretty darn sure that they did not fully grasp it, or for that fact even hear it back then. So, let me read verse 51 out loud here yet again. Let me see what your reactions to the words we read just a few short moments ago might have been as we slow things down here a bit and revisit things. In verse 51 we hear, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (1) Hmmmm, so what you’re saying here is that your flesh is bread, but then you want me to eat bread, so that means I need to eat your flesh? I am not too sure that I am very comfortable with that mindset, and isn’t that kind of cannibalism Jesus? Well, of course it can be confused as cannibalism if we do not happen to widen our scope on things here people! His flesh indeed was the sacrifice for you and for I so that we would be provided the continual forgiveness and grace that we receive every moment of every day despite not being worthy of any of it. Our hunger is not to be simply focused on eating. For we have heard if that is all we focus on then we will always be wanting and craving more, and it will never be enough to satisfy. We will eventually die like the very people that ate the manna in the wilderness. Our hunger needs to transition to the need for knowledge, for relationship, for love, and for understanding. We are to hunger, to eat and drink, and to digest the Word and all of the holy scriptures and stories so that we can come to fully understand all that Jesus has done for us, and even continues to do for us. We also should not just keep it to ourselves, but we need to share what we learn with others as well. This is why the table and eating are such common topics. For at this very table, we often share food and drink, but we also share discussion and the Word. This is why it is vital to get back to this table every week so that we can share as a congregation and community, but it is equally vital to come together at the small tables out there in your homes for food, drink, discussion, and the Word as well. Martin Luther talked about your very homes being small churches too, and for good reason. We all are called to continue to explore and not limit our minds and hearts to having such a narrow scope on understanding or sharing.

Alright, now that I have went down a few rabbit holes, and got rather preachy this morning let me dial it back just a bit here. Let me thank you all for joining us yet again on a Sunday morning. Let me focus on you all sitting out there in the pews, and those of you on the conference call as well. For without all of you we do not have this very congregation, and this very community that we can come back to weekly and find comfort and be able to recharge. God is always here before us, and is here with us, but we need to come on out and join him and our church family each and every week, for our faith is indeed activated even further with and through one another. That is the blessing for sure. We will partake in Holy Communion a little bit later, and we will get to taste and see everything that Jesus has done and continues to do for us. We also get to live that very life and mission out when we go and care for others as we have done the last few days by donating money, purchasing supplies, giving up time packing pencil cases and backpacks, and even handing out hot dogs and water and snacks. We did this together because we felt it was vital for our community as we helped children and families in need and showed them just a little bit of Christ. That is what the Gospel Message will always be about as serving, sharing, caring, and loving one another is exactly what Jesus has taught us. Praise be to God for the several communities of people that came together to do exactly that!

Now that you think I am done you can readjust yourselves in your pews here and readjust yourselves in your chairs at home as well, because I have just cracked the surface. For we come to know in our studies and in our grasping that Jesus gave his all, and is truly the bread of life, as long as we come to believe. There are no other conditions. There are no other works. There are no other demands. There are no other exceptions. As long as we come to believe that Jesus truly is our bread of life then we will be able to eat at the everlasting table. We will no longer be hungry or thirsty. His life following the very scriptures, his crucifixion and resurrection, have accomplished everything and anything for each and every one us. Salvation is not ours following our death and end to this particular chapter on this ball of mud we call earth. Salvation was ours at the very moment our sins were washed away and we died to ourselves and were born again in Christ at our very own baptisms. We need to remember that! We need to truly believe that we are living the blessed life here and now despite what the world and all the other things outside those very church doors do to cloud our sight, minds, and hearts with. Our baptism was not only a symbol that most of our parents and sponsors desired for us when we were infants, but it was a living act with purpose that brought us into the everlasting kingdom in the here and the now. You can thank my New Testament Professor for really painting that picture to me when he sat down and corrected my Jesus is elevator statement at the tail end of one of my classes this past June at Seminary.

In our Gospel Reading we may hear that Jesus speaks of the Jews, but he truly is speaking of everyone. He is not only singling out one group, but those just happen to be the people right in front of him at that particular time. Jesus is cautioning, and even rebuking them as a loving parent would do. The people only see what is in front of them at face value and have such a narrow scope. He is reminding them to look further than right in front of them. He is calling them to look past that here and now of that moment. He was trying to get them to realize that he was the living and breathing blessing standing right in front of and with them, but he was also trying to get them to realize and understand that he was also the blessing for everyone to come after them as well. Jesus even confirmed that for them in verse 45, as we hear it again, “It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’” (1) That means them at that very point, and that means you and I this very day. We are all taught by God!

As we come into this equation, we also must be mindful of our thoughts and perceptions. For we only see what is in front of us at face value and have such a narrow scope at times as well. We must not limit things to certain verses we read, or what one person preaches. We have to take everything in that we can. There is a reason that an acronym was made up for Bible, and that being Basic Information Before Leaving Earth. There is a reason that there are so many churches and preachers out there. It is so we can go and learn in several different ways. Now, I am not saying that every way is right, or every way is the way in which we should believe. However, what I am saying is that everything we read and hear will shape our faith in one way or another. We need to evaluate things with our mind and hearts, and let God clarify what is good and needed for our continued development. We need to broaden our scope and take everything in that we can, and go from there.

We also hear in our Gospel Reading the very confirmation that Jesus is the bread of life for the Jews and those around them as long as they believe. Not like, not admire, not be interested in; but whole heartedly believe. He is standing right in front of them as the very confirmation of any and all scripture. He is standing right in front of them reminding them of the true essence of their faith, and the faith of several others before and after them. All Jesus is requiring is for them to shake off past perceptions and thoughts and truly believe in the life-giving savior that is standing in front of them. He is confirming their faith, but informing them that they continually have to change and grow.

With that being said, that goes for us as well. We need to continually change and grow as we come to the very realization that Jesus is the bread of life for us and those around us as long as we believe. It is amazing to think that the thought process and meaning behind the word believe is so heavy and yet has life changing consequences. However, it is also so simple as well as long as we hunger for the Word, and come to fully trust and love our Triune God. We also need to remember and realize that it is not just for us. That it encompasses everyone, and we need to share the message and the invitation about the bread of life with others, and we need to show and act out our very belief so others can come into the fold just like you and I have.

As we close things out here this morning we are yet again reminded that Jesus gave his all, and is truly the bread of life, as long as we come to believe. “By comparing himself to bread, Jesus makes himself as necessary to us as the food we eat. He is our food, enabling us to live our life’s call, to be alive, our source of spiritual energy when exhausted, our consolation when we are troubled, our strength when we are weak, et cetera.” (4) He is not simply something we devour or consume and it is gone. Jesus is something that we continually seek, hunger and thirst for, learn about, and come to love more and more as we grow in relationship with him. Through his crucifixion and resurrection, we all have become whole. We will always have the bread of life with us, and more importantly be able to share it with others!

Amen and Amen.

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year B 2024

 August 11th, 2024

 12th Sunday After Pentecost

(2) Bible.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus makes himself as necessary to us as the food we eat

 August 11, 2024

 Commentary on John 6:35, 41-51

 Peter Claver Ajer

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus is manna, that miraculous substance with which God cultivated relationship

 with Israel and sustained them in the wilderness.

 August 12, 2018

 Commentary on John 6:35, 41-51

 Susan Hylen

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

 People complain that, in my preaching, I do not tell them what to do.

 August 9, 2015

 Commentary on John 6:35, 41-51

 Craig A. Satterlee

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

 Something very important happens in verse 41, something that is easily overlooked.

 August 12, 2012

 Commentary on John 6:35, 41-51

 Ginger Barfield

(8) SermonCentral.com

 Given For The Life For The World Series

 Contributed by Dustin T Parker on Nov 19, 2006

 Scripture: John 6:41-51

 Denomination: Lutheran

(9) SermonCentral.com

 Come None. Come All

 Contributed by David Roth on Oct 16, 2015

 Scripture: John 6:35-51

 Denomination: Lutheran

**John 6:35, 41-51 (NRSV)**

After feeding more than five thousand people in the wilderness, Jesus teaches them regarding the true significance of this remarkable sign.

35Jesus said to [the crowd,] “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

41Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” 43Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. 44No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. 46Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48I am the bread of life. 49Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

**Theme Statement: What is God doing in or behind this text?**

**(Active verb, saving or empowering action, complete thought, and a simple short sentence)**

Jesus gave his all, and is truly the bread of life, as long as we come to believe.

**Four Page Method**

**Page One (Trouble in the Text) (Characters Only)**

The people only see what is in front of them at face value and have such a narrow scope.

**Page Two (Trouble in the World) (Us Only)**

We only see what is in front of us at face value and have such a narrow scope.

**Page Three (Grace in the Text) (God & Characters)**

Jesus is the bread of life for the Jews and those around them as long as they believe.

**Page Four (Grace in the World) (God & Us)**

Jesus is the bread of life for us and those around us as long as we believe.

**Sermon Unity Elements: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine**

**Text (41-42):** John 6:35, 41-51 (NRSV)

**Theme (42-48):** Faith and Belief

**Doctrine (48-50):** Salvation

**Need (50-52):** Food and Drink, Life and Purpose

**Image (52-56):** Flesh

**Mission (56-57):** Salvation for everyone who believes