**SUNDAY 8/1/21**

**SERMON**

**JOHN 6:24-35**

Sally was 3 years old.

It was her birthday.

Her favorite gift was a Jack-in-the-Box.

All day she would turn the handle causing music to play.

Then suddenly without warning,

          the lid would fly open and the Jack-in-the-box would pop out,

          causing Sally to laugh and clap her hands.

All day she played with her new toy.

Everyone in her family was getting tired of the music box and its silly music

          and the clown popping up.

Finally, it was Sally's bedtime and the music ceased.

As Mother tucked her into bed, she asked Sally:

“Why do you like the music box so much?”

Sally answered right away: "Because every time I turn the handle

          the Jack-in-the-Box pops up."

As Mother tucked her into bed Sally added:

          "Wouldn't it be great to have Jesus in the box?

          Whenever we wanted Him, we could just turn the handle

          and Jesus would pop up and do whatever we want."

Sally's idea is cute for a three-year-old.

But we grown-ups ought to have a better idea of Jesus being with us.

And yet in this morning's Gospel reading, those looking for Jesus,

          sound a lot like Sally.

The people were impressed when Jesus fed them.

They liked the idea of never being hungry, so they sought Jesus wherever He was.

Jesus told them: "You are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs,

          but because you ate the loaves and had your fill".

They didn't like being hungry, and wanted Jesus to feed them all the time.

Because they were more interested in getting a free meal,

          they missed all the more important things Jesus was offering.

How many times have we missed God's blessings

          because they are not packaged the way we expect?

How many times have we rejected a gift from God

          because we do not understand how important it is?

Jesus was trying to teach them to stop thinking about earthly things,

          and start thinking about eternal things.

Stop thinking about food which satisfies an empty stomach,

          and start thinking about spiritual food which will satisfy an empty soul.

But they continued to struggle to understand the meaning of

          Jesus as the bread of life.

At an auction a bottle of wine was up for bidding.

It was finally sold for $60,000.

As the bottle was being handled,

          it slipped from the holder's hands and fell to the floor.

The bottle shattered, spilling the $60,000 wine.

It was mixed with dust on the floor.

It couldn't be retrieved to be consumed.

Suddenly the wine was not worth anything at all.

That is the problem with earthly things.

Bread perishes and turns into trash in the twinkling of an eye.

Jesus tried to teach them that He was offering them eternal salvation for nothing, They did not have to earn it.

It would never spoil, or go bad, or become worthless.

When they believed in Him, and the One who sent Him,

          they would be saved, and God's love would surround them.

When we believe in the One God sent, then we are doing the work of God.

As we accept the Bread of Life Jesus offers us,

          we learn to help one another, love each other,

          and forgive those who have hurt us.

As we learn to accept the most important gift, we begin to live God's way.

He provides us with the gifts we need to do His work wherever we are.

Paul spoke often about loving one another with humility and gentleness.

He taught us to be patient, caring for one another in love and peace.

Because heavenly things are difficult for us earthly creatures to understand,

          we often have trouble understanding what God want us to do.

However, if we listen to God, meaning and understanding gradually become clear:

          believe in the One God sent to us,

          trust Him always,

          and follow Him wherever He leads us.

AMEN