



PASTOR GWEN'S MESSAGE
 FLAMBEAU RAMA SUNDAY
 "JESUS IS THE BREAD OF LIFE"
 SUNDAY AUGUST 1, 2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." Jesus did not say; "I am the kale chips of life" or "I am the fried spam of life" or even I am the "liver and onions of life". But..... neither does he say, "I am the oysters on the half shell of life" or "I am the filet mignon of life." No Jesus simply said, "I am the bread of life."

Bread is not something that we turn our noses up at nor is it usually something fancy either. Every day bread can be found at mealtime in most cultures. Growing up as a kid in the 50's and 60's, we ate a lot of Wonder bread at our house, not because it built strong bodies 12 ways but because Grandpa Brown worked for Hostess delivering it every day in Milwaukee. At Christmas time it was our tradition to make lefse, the potato bread of the Norwegians. Those in Mexico eat tortillas as their bread. The French have Baguettes. The Italians have their Focaccia. The Jewish people eat a braided bread called Challah. No matter how each culture makes it, baked or fried, their form of bread is a staple in their cuisines.

So much a staple that when I say the word bread, an image, or taste or smell probably pops into your heads. However, Jesus came offering a different kind

of bread. It was a bread that never gets stale, a bread that ultimately satisfies and nourishes us perpetually, a bread that will last forever.

The Bread of Life is just that. It is life giving and will sustain us and give us hope. What on earth kind of bread is that you ask? Well, I think it is the bread that most people are searching for. Jesus is the bread that satisfies. God sent Jesus to earth to satisfy our need for forgiveness and give us the promises of abundant and eternal life. Knowing that gives our lives meaning and hope for the future.

Our text from John this morning picks up just after Jesus has fed 5000 people with 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish, a little boy's soggy lunch. Jesus multiplies the food for their bodies so their physical hunger would be satisfied. But was it enough of a sign or a miracle that the crowds followed him and wanted more? You bet it was! They wanted to be fed again. And Jesus goes on to tell them "Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Confusing to the people following Jesus and confusing to many of us as well, I suspect. This was a promise by Jesus so how exactly is Jesus the bread of life? How will He make it so that we are never hungry or thirsty?

I know from my experience at the Lord's Cupboard, that there are many people in our own community that do not have sufficient resources to feed themselves and their families. Over 70% of our school children qualify for free and reduced breakfasts and lunches at school. Yes, there is a need in this very community to provide food for the food insecure. But this is not the hunger that Jesus is talking about, even though it is very real to many of us who work hard to satisfy the needs of others. Also, I have come to understand that having proper nutrition and our bellies full, helps one look at the bigger picture in life. Concentrating on what life is all about is much easier when our stomachs are satisfied.

So yes, Jesus is talking metaphorically about spiritual hunger and thirst. We have a most amazing and gracious God who provides all we need. Notice, I did not say all that we want, but rather all that we need. He provides us the opportunity to have all we need: some food, some love, some breath, some water, and most importantly a relationship with the One who is the bread from heaven, which can satisfy. This promise that Jesus makes through this

statement can take away our sin, which is a big stumbling block for a full and abundant life.

Jesus gives us this promise that we will never hunger and thirst if we have him in our lives, if we simply believe that He is our Savior. We will then be able to accept peace and unconditional love that is Jesus Christ. Remember that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. The bread that Jesus offers is life. As John says in verse 33, "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." It is a free and gracious gift from our Father in Heaven. And not unlike the crowds that followed Jesus, what we need to do is accept the gift with open and repentant hearts.

Folks, we are so blessed to have a God that offers us all we need in life. He gave up his only son for us so that we could have this amazing life here on earth and then the promise of life eternal in heaven one day with him.

When Tammy and I had first talked about doing this service today, she mentioned that we need to count our blessings. I have been thinking about that for weeks now. And as you can see on the front cover of our bulletin, our thought was that we should all take time to "Praise God from whom all blessings flow". We hear the words in the music here this morning, that we are showered with blessings from God. And thank you for coming to join in this opportunity to praise our Lord who gives us bread, who gives us life.

Last week at Christ the Servant, I talked about how things were overwhelming in my life for the past month. The roof needed replacing from the hailstorm that went through Butternut in June. We also needed new gutters and some siding work. I wasn't even done lining up the contractors when our well water tested "unsafe". Then the dog started hobbling around on 3 legs, needing toenail surgery. And the big one, waiting for Rodney's echocardiogram results. Woe is me, but as I look back this week, the Lord was right there with me during all the turmoil. And just last Wednesday we were without power for 10 from another storm. That was a long night keeping the generator running. But the good news is that we have a signed contract paid for by insurance to replace roof and gutters. Our dog had surgery and is fine. Just got the latest water test back after chlorinating the well and it showed SAFE. And best news Rodney's echo showed his heart is pumping fine, no leaky valve. We are so blessed. Blessed to have contractors to do the work and insurance money to pay for it. Blessed to have a great vet just down the

road. Blessed to find a well driller to come and chlorinate the well. Blessed to have the technology to check out Rodney's heart issue.

And we are not just blessed by those things, but the fact that we have a roof over our heads, a home with air-condition, we have ample food on our table, we have family and friends that love us, an amazing church family that is always there to support us. And a God who loves us very much. All our blessings flow from the source of all love and goodness, our God in heaven. Praise to God from whom all blessings flow.

Times do get overwhelming for us no matter who you are, where you live or what you believe. But God is always there offering the bread of life to us. Offering forgiveness, an abundant and eternal life. We just need to eat the bread of life by letting Jesus into our hearts. We need to believe that this life is a gift from God. We need to just focus on our blessings, not our woes and worries. Let go and let God is a great reminder to me when times get tough. And in the meantime, we shout out to the Lord in thanksgiving for all the wonderful things he does for us each and every day.

So, remember next time things get overwhelming in your life that you need to eat some bread. Not Wonder Bread but the bread of life, Jesus Christ. He continuously offers the bread from heaven, himself, for the world. How lucky we are that we can always turn and accept his wonderful love and grace.

AMEN