**SUNDAY 8/8/21**

**SERMON**

**JOHN 6:35, 41-51**

A theology professor at a Southern seminary,

          frequently said the grace before meals.

He always used this table blessing before they ate the meal before them:

          "Lord, we thank you for food: food for the body, and food for the soul.

          May we never lack for either, and give us an appetite for both!"

Food for the body and food for the soul.

We need them both.

We need food to strengthen and nourish our bodies,

          and to provide the energy we need each day.

We also need food for our souls,

          to provide the nourishment to do God's work.

John presented Jesus not simply as a Leader, Teacher, or Physician,

          but as food – bread.

Jesus described himself as "The Living Bread which came down from Heaven".

He said: "I am the Bread of Life."

His presence in our lives provides us with the strength and nourishment

          we need to live God's way.

Without food to eat, our bodies will shrink and weaken,

          we become sick, and before long, we will die.

Without the Bread of Life, our souls become weak, and we wander away

          from God's ways.

And we fail to be all that God planned us to be.

There are many "I am" sayings, especially throughout the Gospel of John.

Jesus struggled to teach his followers, as well as great crowds of people,

          to understand who He was, and how God wanted us to live,

          and how this was possible because He was with us,

          leading  us, teaching us, nourishing us, and strengthening us.

By teaching us who He was, He taught us how to live God's way.

Our heavenly Father wants to abide within us, and help us to live within Him.

A Pastor and his young son Jeremy

          were walking along the seashore together one Sunday afternoon.

Jeremy began to ask his father about that morning's sermon.

          "You said Jesus would abide in us, and we can abide in Him.

          But Dad, I don't understand

                    how Jesus can live in us, and we live in him, at the same time."

As they walked along the beach, Dad noticed an empty bottle with a cork in it.

He picked up the bottle and half-filled it with sea water.

Dad put the cork back in the top of the bottle,

          and flung it out into the ocean.

As they watched the bottle bob up and down in the sea he said,

“Jeremy , the sea is in the bottle, and the bottle is in the sea.”

They watched the bottle for a few minutes and Dad said:

"When God is in us, we can live in Him.

We are not alone, and He watches over us, always."

Jesus also told us we are His sheep, and He is the great Shepherd.

Sheep are not very bright, and often get into difficulties because of their behavior.

If a sheep is knocked over onto its back, it cannot get up without assistance.

Often, when we have been knocked over by difficult circumstances,

          problems in our lives, or simply our own foolishness,

          we need someone to come along and help us back on our feet.

Jesus promises He is with us always.

He will never forget us, or ignore us.

He walks with us through each day, helping and guiding us.

Like a Good Shepherd, Jesus loves and cares for his sheep, no matter how foolish we are.

He picks us up, dusts us off, and sets us on our feet again.

A gentleman was traveling in Palestine.

He came across a shepherd and his sheep.

He stopped and chatted with him for a while.

The shepherd explained a lot about sheep,

          and showed him the place where the sheep were led at night.

It consisted of four walls and a way in, but with no door.

The gentleman asked about their safety at night, since there was no door.

The shepherd replied, “I am the door.

          When the light has gone, and all the sheep are inside, I lie in that open place.     No sheep ever goes out but across my body.

          No wolf comes in unless he crosses my body.”

          I am the door.

          I protect my sheep."

Jesus has told us he is the door, or the gate.

He watches over us as a Shepherd watches over his flock of sheep.

His presence protects us, and keeps us safe.

A woman in Arkansas was sitting in her car in a parking lot.

Suddenly she heard a loud bang, and then felt a sharp pain in the back of her head. She reached back and felt a warm sticky substance on the back of her head

          and realized that she had been shot.

Her life flashed in front of her eyes – all the things she had done, and not done,

          all the people she was leaving behind.

She was holding her hands behind her head

          when a stranger walked by and noticed that something was wrong.

He stopped and asked, "Are you OK?"

The woman answered, "I've been shot in the head, and I'm holding my brains in."

Confused, the stranger asked: "Is it all right if I get in the back of your car,

          and see what is wrong?"

She told him that would be Ok, and he climbed into the car.

Well, it wasn't her brains.

It was dough.

A Pillsbury biscuit canister had exploded in the back seat,

          apparently from the heat,

          making a loud explosion,

          and shooting dough onto the back of the woman's head.

When the stranger explained it all to the woman, she said:

“I feel like I have been resurrected!”

Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life."

The time will come when we will face our own death.

But that is not the end.

It is the time when Jesus will take us to a whole new way of life.

Recently, a survey was held in the US among people from all ethnic backgrounds,

          cultures, religions, social strata, and walks of life.

One of the questions they were asked was:

“How satisfying or fulfilling is your life?”

The answer was alarming:

          more than 70% of the respondents answered

          that they were very much dissatisfied with their lives.

They felt their lives were not really fulfilling;

          life felt meaningless, without purpose.

The answer was the same among poor people and rich.

It was the same among successful executives,

          and among the unemployed and uneducated.

Almost all of those who felt their life was satisfying and fulfilling

          believed in God.

With God in our lives we discover purpose and meaning,

          satisfaction and fulfillment.

Jesus told us: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

With Him in our lives each day, we discover joy and enthusiasm.

Jesus is the Light of the world.

He brightens our busiest days, and the darkest of nights.

When we follow in His footsteps,

          we discover amazing things.

Eternal Life is waiting for us.

In the meantime, when we live His way, and let Him guide us each day.

          It makes all the difference in the world.

AMEN