**8/4/24**

**Jesus, The Bread of Life**

**John 6:24-35 (NRSV)**

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

Today’s Gospel Reading was exciting to study and break down. It was one where Jesus kind of even gets a little snarky with the people. I mean if you explore it a little more deeply you may even think he is using some sort of satire or sarcasm at times. However, I assure you that he is not. Jesus is actually trying to broaden the people’s narrow scope on things. He is even calling us out today for the narrow questions we may ask or explore in trying to figure out the very role Jesus plays in our lives and in our hearts. Jesus wanted the people back then, and his people right now to focus on a broader picture. He wants us to truly grasp through our faith and belief that he truly is the Bread of Life that will feed and sustain every physical and spiritual need that we have in our lives. Alright, now that I got a little of my initial excitement out of the way let me draw back a little bit here.

Good morning and welcome to all of you on the conference call and those of you out there in the pews. I am blessed to be back here with you all following my trip to Pittsburgh. Now, I must admit that I missed you and the so-called grind or normal that is here in this community, in this congregation, and in this ministry. However, a week of holy rest is exactly what the Great Physician prescribed, and for a change I actually chose to listen and not just simply preach and talk about it a few short weeks ago. Now, with that very rest also came the time to reconnect with my body and my health, as I got the chance to support my buddy from middle school and his gym venture as I attended twice while I was home. I also got to spend time with family and other friends, I got the chance to brew beer and go golfing several times, there were also several other adventures that even led to a chance for my mother, aunt, and I to experience the Pittsburgh Steelers at Training Camp for our very first times. However, with all of this connecting, fun, and rest also came a week of continuing to pray and read. Now, I might be a year older following my birthday, but I would like to believe that wisdom comes with that for sure when I continue to be open to learn and adapt. Exploring the Word and continuing to keep connected while wanting to continue to grow and change is vital to our very existence. Those things never go on break. Unfortunately, we all seem to need to be reminded of that sometimes, because after all it is very easy to get weary and lost out there in the wilderness. It is very easy to throw our hands up in the air when things are not going our way, or the way we perceived that they should have. Regrettably, it is very easy to forget that The Bread of Life is always with us and in our very hearts. That is precisely why we come back here each and every Sunday. We come here to dig a little deeper into the Word, and because we need more nourishment and strength. We also need this very community, this very congregation, these very people we are surrounded by to get a form of holy rest and comfort on Sundays to be able to go back out there in the world and show others a little bit of Christ each day during the battles and struggles in the real world. As we go on our journey following this Worship Service today, I ask that we all keep in mind that Jesus continues to remind us that he is our everlasting food and drink as long as we believe. As we remember that we are indeed putting our faith in action folks, and as we go out there and share with others, we are following our very call and commission.

I also want to take this moment to thank all of you, as I was blessed to be able to take this week away and have all of you continue keeping on in your ministries and commitments you have to this very congregation, church, and community. I also know that some of you stepped up and did a few extra things. That is indeed what it is all about, supporting one another. I am ever more so thankful that Heather felt the call to prepare a sermon and stand back up here in front of you and Lead our Worship Service despite saying she would never do so following her very first time a few short years ago. I also happen to understand that I have a steep hill to climb following that very Sermon that my wife delivered last week. I know for certain that she did a good job with cracking open the several weeks of discussion and focus we are going to have on Jesus continuing to feed and nourish physically and spiritually. I even happen to have heard that she sent you all home with something too. That visualization, that imagery, and being able to have something in our hands at times to connect to the story is vital. The Words that we deliver from the front of the church are just not simply enough sometimes, and I am glad that she did this. So, can anyone tell me what you went home with last week? (Give time for Response) Can any of you tell me some of the other visuals or things you remember from last week? (Give time for response) Awesome! You all really got the point. You all really heard and lived the story. Good Stuff! Thank you again Heather for covering while I was gone last week, and thank you all for stepping up and helping out and doing what you did, or just being present where you were to support others.

Now this is exactly where I come in with the not so good news. Unfortunately, this is where I get to tell you that you and I are these same people we actually hear about in our story today. We are the very ones that are out there wandering along in the wilderness. We are the ones that keep coming back to find Jesus in this very space week in and week out, and even seem surprised at times. We may not take a boat to get here, but we manage to get here whether it is in person or on the conference call. Through this very travel and seeking sometimes we unfortunately forget that Jesus is out there ahead of us, and also with us along our journeys everywhere and anywhere we go each and every single day. However, we have to truly believe that. All too often we become the people feeling the need to be fed because we are hungry, we feel the need to see more signs to make things more real, we thirst in various ways for more as well. If you really think about it, and put things into a totally different but yet same perspective, we actually all are even the very woman at the well that we talked about just a few short weeks ago. Through our very faith and belief, we know and come to the very understanding that Jesus is truly life changing. We are not just coming for food and water that will only temporarily sustain us, we are coming to this very table and this very place to be healed and restored in and through Jesus because life and the world have unfortunately beat us up and this is our refuge. Friends and family, people out there in the community, things going on in the news, and even world events cause us to be weary. So, we need this very reminder and this very comfort in our community, in our congregation, to be our constant reminder that the very Bread of Life is constantly present with us and in our hearts!

Now, you may be sitting there and thinking to yourself that Vicar Vince just totally took a turn that I did not expect. If that is the case, then good! I need to feel what I am doing up here, but I need to ensure you are hearing me. I need to ensure that I am not just reading another book report off to you, or giving you some meaningless presentation. I am here to teach, but I am also here to learn with you. We are all blessed to have the Holy Spirit right beside us as we go out there and battle all the things in our world. Our Father is looking over us, and he is providing a shield of protection for us as we go out there and be the church and do our ministry. With all of this being said I am going to ask you to sit back a little while longer as we take a little more in and dive in just a little bit deeper to our Gospel Reading today.

So, does it amaze you as we read on in our Gospel Readings that having Jesus right in front of them seems to almost be too good to be true at times? I mean the people back then were searching for the very person that the scriptures told them was going to come despite him being right there in the flesh. It was almost if they were blinded by his very presence. He was living out the scriptures that they had been reading and studying. This is where physical needs and desires unfortunately often overtake spiritual longings. Their tummies were grumbling louder than their hearts. Unfortunately, the people back then were always hungry and seeking more despite everything they needed being right in front of them and in their hearts.

Now, this is exactly where you and I come into the picture as well here folks. We go out there in the wilderness and do our thing, we conduct our ministry, but then sometimes we get weary along the journey. This is where we come to realize that we are no better or no different than the very people we read about in our Gospel Reading today. Unfortunately, we come to realize that we are always hungry and seeking more despite everything we need being right in front of us and in our hearts. We may not actually have Jesus physically standing right in front of us in a robe with his sandals on, or do we? We need to picture Jesus in those people out there that we are called to serve and to help. We need to provide physical and spiritual nourishment to others through our very acts of faith by treating them with dignity and respect. This is how we will come to fully realize in our hearts and show others that our hunger and thirst are no more with and through Jesus. However, our hunger and thirst are met because we are indeed sharing and caring from our hearts just as Jesus has shown us and called us to do. That is precisely how we get our fill and live out our lives as followers of Christ.

In and through all of that we are blessed to hear in our final verse today, in verse 35, that Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” Jesus continues to remind the people he is their everlasting food and drink as long as they believe. He may seem like he is putting his people to the test often, or even shaking his head at them because they are just not getting it. However, what he is doing is continually providing and being. Jesus is not giving up, he is not getting weary in his ways, because he sees the larger picture all the time. That is why he continues to keep on keeping on and in and through his very actions. Jesus is hopeful that the people will continue to develop faith and belief, and truly have that ah ha moment. Jesus knows that the people believed and trusted in Moses, and that they were thankful for the manna that their ancestors received. However, what he needs them to realize that Moses was an active part of the community of faith back then like they are at that current moment. Jesus wants and needs them to realize that anything and everything does indeed come through and from God, not just through a person. To see and to eat is vital in their development of faith, and through these very actions and provisions he is hopeful that these people really do come to the understanding that Jesus is truly the Bread of Life.

This is also where we play our very active part in the story today as well. Jesus continues to remind us that he is our everlasting food and drink as long as we believe. These stories were alive way back then, but they are alive today as well. That is precisely why I imagine that we have the interest, the desire, and the hunger to come back to this very table every week. We realize that this is not just some bread or some wine or juice in a cup. We realize that in and through Holy Communion that our God is fully present with us. There is a reason he gave the command to his people oh so many years ago to eat and drink, and there is a reason we continue to do that to this very day. It provides us strength, and it restores us! It provides forgiveness of sins, and we are reminded of the very life and salvation through that are provided from his death and resurrection, let alone through the very words that come from this very table. Holy Communion is not just some act, but it is us fully partaking in the meal with each other as apostles with our very God present and with us. We no longer need to hunger or hurt for we have a God who is bigger than all of that. We do not need to be the ones saying what we heard the people say in verse 34, “Sir, give us this bread always.” We need to come to the very realization that he has indeed given us this very bread and this very drink so that we can have everlasting nourishment, strength, and the ability to continue to go out and serve. We believe and know for certain that Jesus truly is the Bread of Life, and that he is not just some temporary food, comfort, or healing. Jesus is truly life changing! Through this very belief and conviction, we are able to continue to show a little bit of Christ to others out there in the world, and even in our very homes and congregation, exactly as we are called to do. Thanks be to God for that!

Amen and Amen.

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year B 2024

 August 4th, 2024

 11th 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

 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

 Even when the crowd asks for “this bread,” Jesus knows they aren’t quite ready for it

 August 4, 2024

 Commentary on John 6:24-35

 Alicia D. Myers

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

 John presents Jesus as manna, the miraculous bread God provided and through

 which Israel learned to trust God’s word.

 August 5, 2018

 Commentary on John 6:24-35

 Susan Hylen

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

 The text for this week sets up in much the same way as last week’s. The crowd is

 looking for Jesus.

 August 5, 2012

 Commentary on John 6:24-35

 Ginger Barfield

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

 Preachers may need to remind their congregations about last week’s text and the

 feeding of the multitude because in today’s text, John begins to unpack the meaning

 of that earlier event.

 August 2, 2009

 Commentary on John 6:24-35

 Brian Peterson

(8) SermonCentral.com

 The Food We Need Series

 Contributed by Eric Stefanski on Aug 3, 2003

 Scripture: Exodus 16:2-15, John 6:22-35

 Denomination: Lutheran

(9) SermonCentral.com

 Jesus - "I Am The Bread Of Life" Series

 Contributed by Ronald Harbaugh on Aug 1, 2009

 Scripture: John 6:24-35

 Denomination: Lutheran

**John 6:24-35 (NRSV)**

 Many of the five thousand people Jesus fed in the wilderness continued to follow

 him throughout the countryside. Jesus challenges them to consider the real

 nature of their quest.

 24When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were [beside the sea,]

 they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

 25When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi,

 when did you come here?” 26Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you

 are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of

 the loaves. 27Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures

 for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the

 Father has set his seal.” 28Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform

 the works of God?” 29Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you

 believe in him whom he has sent.” 30So they said to him, “What sign are you

 going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you

 performing? 31Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He

 gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ” 32Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I

 tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my

 Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33For the bread of God is that

 which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” 34They said to him,

 “Sir, give us this bread always.”

 35Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be

 hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

**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 continues to remind us that he is our everlasting food and drink as long as we believe.

**Four Page Method**

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

The people were always hungry and seeking more despite everything they needed being right in front of them and in their hearts.

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

We are always hungry and seeking more despite everything we need being right in front of us and in our hearts.

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

Jesus continues to remind the people he is their everlasting food and drink as long as they believe.

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

Jesus continues to remind us that he is our everlasting food and drink as long as we believe.

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

**Text (41-42):** John 6:24-35 (NRSV)

**Theme (42-48):** Feeding Physically versus Spiritually

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

**Need (50-52):** To See and to Eat to develop Faith

**Image (52-56):** Jesus, The Bread of Life

**Mission (56-57):** Believing that Jesus truly is the Bread of Life, and not just some temporary food, comfort, or healing. Jesus is truly life changing!