

“Don’t Forget the Bread”

Date: August 2, 2015

Place: Lakewood UMC

Theme: Jesus, Bread of Life

Occasion: Pentecost 10, Year B

Texts: Exodus 16:1-5, 21-26; John 6:24-35

The wonderful writer Max Lucado tells about a time when his wife, Denalyn, called as he was driving home. “Can you stop at the grocery store,” she asked, “and pick up some bread?” “Of course,” he said. “Do I need to tell you where to find it?” his wife asked. “Are you kidding?” Max asked. “I was born with a bread-aisle tracking system.” Like a knowing wife, Denalyn said, “Just stay focused, Max.”

To make a long story short, he picked up Oreo cookies and barbeque chips in one aisle, found some ice cream on the way to another aisle, purchased a magazine at the checkout counter, and you guessed it, he went home without the bread.

Max went back to the grocery. Ever happen to any of the men in this congregation? Sorry, been there and done that myself. What was I thinking? Poor Max. He forgot the one thing he went to get, the one essential product. He forgot the bread.

Last week we dealt with the feeding of the 5,000. At the end of the story, the crowd is so excited about Jesus that they want to crown him King. This, of course, was not the purpose for which he was sent. So he withdrew to a nearby mountain. Today’s lesson occurs just a little while later.

When the crowd finds him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” implying that he somehow got there super-naturally. But Jesus deflects from their question and says to them. “Truly I tell you, you are looking for me

not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”

Just as he used water as his talking point with the woman at the well, he now uses food as a teaching tool. The feeding of the 5,000 with the loaves and the fishes was a sign pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus is trying to point them toward a spiritual reality rather than a physical one.

He uses the illustration of bread to make his point, reminding them about Moses and the manna in the wilderness, our Old Testament lesson this morning. For many Jews, Moses was the greatest of all the prophets; it was he who gave the Israelites manna.

Jesus corrected their perception in three ways. First, he reminded them it was God, not Moses, who provided the manna. Two, he wanted them to see that God is still giving manna now, not just in the past.

And finally, he tried to make them understand that he, Jesus, is the true Bread from Heaven. Manna was food for the body, just as the loaves and fishes were for the body. But Jesus is God’s provision for the soul. Jesus himself is the Bread of God.

The woman at the well didn’t understand when Jesus told her that he was the Living Water. Now, the crowd didn’t understand what Jesus was talking about when he said, “I am the Bread of Heaven.”

Jesus was offering them bread that would satisfy them forever. He was making a profound point that we in the Western world today might miss. For us, bread is optional. We may enjoy it, especially in the variety of ways that we can buy bread in our stores. Whole wheat,

white, multigrain, unleavened, sourdough; we can get it as a biscuit, a roll, a waffle, a bagel, a bun, the list goes on. Or, we can *not* eat it at all. For us, bread is a luxury we take for granted.

But in Palestine in Jesus' day, bread was not looked upon as an add-on to a meal. Bread was an essential staple. You might have nothing else to eat. But as long as you had bread, you could survive. Bread was seen as that which provides life.

Jesus was saying to the crowd and he's saying to us "I am the one who provides life abundant and everlasting. I am not an option, if you really want life. I am essential. I am necessary."

Because we are not as dependent on bread as Jesus' original listeners, we may not appreciate as much as they what he meant when he said that he is the bread of life. He is saying, in effect, "You cannot live without me. I am essential to your life."

This is the essential truth we need to take away with us this day – Christ alone can satisfy our deepest need. Pastor Ronnie Floyd put it this way: "People will do anything to be satisfied in life. In fact, people are searching for life and meaning in life...."

"The drunkard is looking for life. The drug addict is looking for life. The adulterer is looking for life. The corporate climber is looking for life. Even the American Redneck, whatever that is, is looking for life.

"In each person, God has created a void. That void is the desire for meaning and fulfillment in life. Even though all persons are looking for life, many are searching in all the wrong places. I believe firmly that all persons are in the process of searching for Jesus. Each person here today is in the process of coming to Jesus. They think

they're searching for meaning in life, but they're really searching for Jesus." (sermonsearch.com)

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, do you know what the first petition is? "Give us this day our daily bread." Of course, that's a request that our daily needs be provided, bread for the body. But we also need to seek daily for bread for the soul. That bread is Jesus, the Messiah. Who else loves us as much as he does?

Jesus sacrificed his life so that we could have life, abundant life, eternal life. The Bread of Life has come so that we can have life! As you go through your daily routine, don't be like Max and forget the bread. Let us seek Jesus, daily, that we might have eternal life. Amen? Amen!

Acknowledgements to King Duncan, esermons.com.