

JESUS IS THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN
10th Sunday After Pentecost ✠ 02 August Anno Domini 2015
Exodus 16:2-15 ✠ Ephesians 4:1-16 ✠ John 6:22-35
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John 6:22-35

²² On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. ²³ Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” ²⁶ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” ²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” ³⁰ So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ” ³² Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst...”

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

Introduction

Consider the following things: caviar, escargot, goose liver pâté; tripe, haggis, menudo; steak tartar, dog, squid; lobster, sushi, raw oysters; truffles, beets, okra; McDonalds’, Burger King, Wendy’s, Carl’s Junior; and Twinkies.

People have strong opinions about food. They usually know what kind they’ll eat and not eat. They can often tell you which foods are too expensive or too shabby. They have their own ideas about nutrition, and they have their own ideas about quality. Just try to feed a dog to some non-Filipinos, or a wheel of cheese to people in China. It ain’t so easy. People are attached to their own food.

I. BREAD IS FOR THE DEAD AND DYING

In our Gospel reading, the crowd of people is so eager to find Jesus that they get in boats and cross the Sea of Galilee. But when they find him, Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves” (v. 26). Everyone on earth wants their daily bread, and many will go to great lengths to find it!

The first time the Bible mentions the word “bread” is when God speaks the curse in Genesis 3: “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return*” (vv. 17-19).

So bread is a result of our first parents' fall into sin and death. It's what mankind suffers to make in order to stay alive. Foods and farm tools change, but people will always fight over what and how much bread is good enough. We are born spiritually dead into a cursed world that no longer works together with us. Once our bread is eaten and gone, we have to look for more. We struggle and sweat until the day when *no* amount of bread and struggling will keep our bodies from dying and returning to dust. Fear and worry about having enough will be with our sinful flesh until the end.

[In Luther's Small Catechism, in the explanation of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer ("Give us this day our daily bread"),] Dr. Luther says, "Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body..." So what kinds of things do *you* hunger and struggle for each day? What kind of bread is important and wanted by *you*? What do you feed on and find so needful for your life? What will you work, sweat, chase, and suffer after—fight for—worry and grieve over when it's gone or unavailable? When do you have enough, and when is it good enough? Here's a question for you: Are you feeding on *it*, or is it really feeding on you?

II. THE TRUE, LIFE-GIVING BREAD IS FROM HEAVEN.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus continues by telling the crowd, "Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal" (v. 27). We are very eager to work for the worldly bread that passes away and is no more. But how often do we seek the food of eternal life, which Jesus offers to us? Are we busy worrying and laboring over those things that come to an end? How little do we think of the feast which Jesus has already made—the one which has no end!

When we embrace the bread of the flesh rather than the bread of God it is sin. Repent!

It is as though Jesus said, "You've been working for what isn't even food. You call that bread? It passes away, just as *you* will! How can it give you life? No, true bread is what I and my Father will give you from heaven. Look for *that* bread! *Hunger* for that bread!"

Jesus says, "...it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven" (v. 32b). Our dying world can only offer dead food for dying people. Death doesn't give birth to the living. Our sin causes us to want bad bread more than good bread, false bread more than true bread, earthly bread more than heavenly bread. We cannot make the food which endures to eternal life, and our sinful flesh does not even desire it. The true bread must come from heaven, and God must give it to us. The *Son of Man* must give it to us.

But how can these things be?

III. THE TRUE, LIFE-GIVING BREAD FROM HEAVEN IS JESUS.

Jesus says in our reading, "...the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (vv. 33, 35). JESUS IS HIMSELF THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN WHICH GIVES LIFE TO THE WORLD. This is a wonderful mystery. Bread is a result of the curse of Genesis 3, and must be made from hard toil, sweaty work, and preparation. The true bread from heaven *also* had to be made with hard toil, sweaty work, and preparation. The eternally begotten Son of God could not simply fall from the sky to give us the eternal life we need. He had to *make* the bread—His human life. He had to put our sin and death to death, and raise us to new, spiritual life. And that takes *painful work*, just as the making of bread takes hard toil and preparation.

Consider what Jesus means when he says, "the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you" (v. 27). The name "Son of Man" is used to describe Jesus in his human weakness and suffering on our behalf—His humiliation. Jesus is the eternally-begotten Son of God; Jesus

is from heaven. But it is not enough for Him to simply show up. He must be “*made man*” as it says in the Nicene Creed. He must *do* something. And what He does He must do in total toil, weakness, and suffering. It is the cost of making true, heavenly bread. Jesus needed to make a new human righteousness—a new human holiness—a new, spiritual human life—a new human faith. Jesus came from heaven to be born of our very own flesh of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so that He might remake in that flesh a new, living humanity to God—a second Adam. Jesus is the true bread from heaven which gives life to the world, but He wasn’t done “toiling” until He was dead and done suffering for our sins on the cross. He had to finish making our righteousness. Our sins had to die. He took upon *Himself* all the sins, pains, troubles, and temptations of this world that eat us up to death like mold on bread. It was unbearably painful. He felt the Hellfire of God’s wrath. Jesus our bread of life was being baked by the flames of Hell for our sin.

Consider then what we receive in the Lord’s Supper: Bread! Jesus’ very own crucified and *resurrected* body, given for our forgiveness, life, and salvation! This is no accident. This is not just a clever coincidence. Jesus tells us that He is the true bread from heaven which gives life to the world, and He then tells us that the bread of His Supper is His body. That’s because *this* is where He wants us to find Him and feed on Him! He wants us to cling to Him and His words by clinging to His Supper. By hungering for His Supper, we hunger for Him. We learn about Him in His Word—who He is and what He is like—what His Supper is. But it is in His Supper that we get to embrace Him. The Lord’s Supper is not an add-on to our Christian lives. It is and should be the very center and focus of our lives. Everything is ordered around it, which is to say, everything is ordered around Jesus—Son of God and Son of Man—the one Christ.

Just as Jesus our bread is not just God, but also crucified and resurrected *man*, so too the Lord’s Supper is not just bread and wine, but Christ Jesus Himself in the flesh. The Lord’s Supper is not a mere symbol pointing to a Jesus in a faraway Heaven. Heaven is in Jesus, and Jesus has promised to be found in the bread and wine of His Supper. Trust in *this* bread! It’s already baked and finished—prepared for you! It’s all you need, and nothing needs to be added to it. In Jesus the true bread, you are made clean. You are no longer eaten up by death, because *Jesus* is feeding you His life. Jesus says, “**I have come to give you life and that more abundantly.**” **JESUS IS THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN, GIVEN FOR YOU, and in Him you shall live forever. THANKS BE TO GOD!**

In Jesus’ Holy Name—Amen.

