

John 6:24-35  
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost  
August 8, 2021

Walk down the bread aisle of a grocery store and you are confronted with choices. There are several brands and even more varieties. White, wheat, honey wheat, rye, multigrain, twelve grain, nine grain, multi-seed, oatmeal, oat nut, cinnamon, cinnamon raisin, pumpernickel, sourdough, cottage, peasant, French and Italian. What's a husband to do when sent to the store for a loaf of bread?

We face a similar situation when it comes to the religious world. Many ideas and approaches are promoted including do-it-yourself, whatever works for you. I would submit that not all are equal, just as the nutritional value and additives in breads vary. So we urge

#### SAVOR THE BEST BREAD

- I. Bread that will not spoil v25-27a
- II. Bread that has the Father's seal of approval v27b-32
- III. Bread that satisfies our hunger v33-35

If we are going to savor the best bread we want a kind that will not spoil. A crowd of people searched for Jesus. You reviewed his miracle last week. They had enjoyed an abundance of food, as the Savior had noted, "You ate the loaves and had your fill." With that benefit under their belts (literally) they desired that it continue. "They intended to come and make him king by force." Wouldn't it be handy to have such an easy supplier around all the time?

So that the people might back off a bit and settle their emotions, Jesus had left for a mountain by himself. His disciples had headed off in a boat. In the preceding verses we hear of a storm that came up and Jesus walked to them on the water and stilled the storm.

The absence of both Jesus and his disciples was noticed so many people sailed to Capernaum. "When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, 'Rabbi, when did you get here?'" They were hinting that another miracle might be involved. Could there be some more benefits for them?

They were looking too low. Their thoughts focused on earthly matters which do not last. Sometimes when we eat a feast we moan, "I'm so stuffed I won't have to eat for three days!" But we will. Food also can spoil. Even with refrigeration which we have but the people in the text did not, it still happens. Items get pushed

to the back for several days or longer and when we rediscover it we ask, "What is this?" It's green and slimy even if it's not spinach. Or it's covered with fuzzy mold.

That's the way it is with all earthly items and desires. They do not last. Our possessions are quickly used up or become outdated. None of them will outlive this planet's existence.

So don't attach your life to items that will not endure. Food is a blessing and we are thankful for the bounty that God has blessed our American agriculture with the ability to produce. It is not wrong to work for food. Faithful labor is the way God normally provides for our needs. Just recognize where food fits in the grand scheme of things. What doesn't last is not the number one priority. The same is true of all material items. They are blessings, welcome gifts from God, but the accumulation of perishing products is not the focus of our lives and not the reason we follow Jesus. He has something better, something greater, in store for us.

## II.

There is bread that has the Father's seal of approval. Jesus' miracles met the needs of people and demonstrated his compassion and care, but there was more. He called them signs. Signs often point to something. We see lots of them. There are signs alerting us to school crossing areas, signs before a curve and signs about area attractions. We appreciate such information. The miracles Jesus did were signs that God's power was at work. They showed his deity, that he was true God.

Here we find them termed the Father's "seal of approval." Seals of approval give reassurance that products meet standards. I remember when items carried the Good Housekeeping seal of approval. Electrical equipment had a tag with the Underwriter's Lab endorsement. Now we look for the Energy Star on appliances to make sure they will operate efficiently. My Sunday morning Rice Krispies box says it is certified for low fodmap, whatever that means. "On him (Jesus) God the Father has placed his seal of approval." We heard it at his baptism. As Jesus and John came out of the Jordan River God spoke from heaven, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." His resurrection on Easter was the seal that the Father had accepted his payment for the sins of the world.

The group gathered around Jesus misunderstood his point. They asked about works they might do to receive that approval. Again they were aiming too low, to their own works. Or too high, to try to meet God's standards. His law demands perfection. We don't make it, not even outwardly, much less the full meaning of his commands that takes in also thoughts and words. It calls for good to do and not just bad to avoid. For example, when God forbids murder, he's not just telling us

not to shoot anybody or club them to death. He views hatred as murder and does not want us to employ mean speech and putdowns. He calls for us to act unselfishly in helping others. Does anybody meet that standard 100% of the time? No, not one of us.

When questioned further, Jesus explained, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." God seeks faith. Trust him as the only true God and Savior from sin. Faith is produced by God's Spirit working through his Word. It is a gift of his grace. We don't bring ourselves to faith but we do work to maintain faith by fighting temptation, using the means of grace (the gospel in word and sacrament) to strengthen our faith.

The crowd still missed the point. If we are to believe, they demanded, give us proof that you are the correct object of faith. "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" Hadn't they just witnessed and benefited from the miracle the day before? It wasn't enough for them. They referred to the manna that we heard about in the First Lesson today. They implied that was a better act. Jesus gave one meal to a group of people, admittedly a large one, but he started with something to work with. The manna fed a whole nation six days a week for forty years. They overstated the case. Moses was not the supplier. God gave them the bread from heaven. Manna only met earthly hunger. Jesus had something better for them.

He was referring to his spiritual work as their Savior. He came to our world as a human being. He was God from all eternity. He lived a sinless life as our Substitute. He died on the cross for the sins of the world. We have the peace and joy of forgiveness in him. We receive it by faith. Faith is a miracle greater than manna or feeding more than five thousand hungry people. Its benefits do last.

Jesus was instructing his hearers, but more: he was calling them to faith. He calls you and me to believe in him. Don't misunderstand his work and purpose. Trust that he is the approved Savior as the Spirit has led you to know. Have what you need for security in this troubling and confused world.

### III.

As you savor it you will find this is bread that satisfies our hunger. It gives life to the world. Jesus forgives our sins. That's all sins. He forgives the original sin with which we were born. He has wiped clean the record of our sins of commission, that is, the wrongs we have done. He pardoned our sins of omission, the good we failed to do. His forgiveness included our sins of thought and desire as well as the words and actions that violated his law. It makes no difference whether our sins were done in ignorance or were deliberate: Jesus paid the price.

Our wrongs may have been open and known by many or hidden in the deepest recesses of our hearts. Jesus shed his blood and paid for them. He forgave our sins that caused pain and hurt to others and those that seemed not to affect anyone. Yes, he lifted the entire load from our shoulders. What a relief!

He gives us spiritual life. We were dead in sin, unable to please God. He has brought us to know and trust him, to understand spiritual truths and to live for him. We are no longer slaves of Satan. We live to serve God and to bring him glory.

The life our Savior produces never ends. We will share eternity with God in heaven. There we will live in perfection. We will offer total service to our Lord.

We will never need anything more. "He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." As we noted, earthly food does not last. The manna came six days a week (all but Saturday) and it stopped when the resources of Canaan supplied food for the Israelites. The five thousand fed by Jesus' miraculous meal ate again from other supplies. The twelve baskets of leftovers got empty. My stomach will be growling before I arrive home this morning. The spiritual meal we receive in the forgiveness of sins is for all sins, not just those of the past. Christ's peace fills our hearts and remains with us. When we know the Savior we need nothing more. We have a continuous supply of his mercy and forgiveness.

Our spiritual life is sustained by this food supply. Keep coming to Jesus. You will never hunger. We have a direct pipeline to the source. He supplies all you need to sustain faith no matter what kind of temptations and troubles you face.

"I am the bread of life," Jesus asserted. "I AM" is the name God gave to himself when speaking to Moses at the burning bush. Jesus spoke it here regarding himself. He is true God, the God of free and faithful grace, who keeps his Word.

He is the only one who saves. Receive the bread that will not spoil, the bread that has the Father's seal of approval, the bread that satisfies our hunger. Savor the best bread. Have life from the bread of life.