

John 6: 25 – 35

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, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do 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.” ²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform 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, “What sign are you going to give us, then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ” ³² Then 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. ³³ For the bread of God is that which^[a] comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴ They said to him, “Sir,^[b] give us this bread always.”

³⁵ 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.

“Feasting on the Bread of Life”

John 6: 25 – 35

November 23, 2025

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John's passage ends with a wonderful promise.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

We have been studying Luke's gospel, and suddenly this Sunday, we are on John.

Because the lectionary switched to John for the theme of Thanksgiving.

To give you a little bit of background.... Chapter 6 of John's gospel starts with two of Jesus miracles. First, he multiplied five barley loaves and two fish to feed five thousand men, not counting women and children. This miracle was observed by the whole crowd, and they all ate their fills. The second miracle was more private. After the disciples had already started across the sea to go to Capernaum, Jesus walked on the water to join them. So, it was just the disciples who observed the second miracle of Jesus.

The two miracle stories are, then, followed by this teaching moment as our scripture for today describes.

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

The miraculous feeding dramatically demonstrates and becomes the example of what Jesus is trying to teach. That Jesus has gifts and resources to meet the full range of human needs.

He supplies the daily bread that we need to sustain life. And by feeding the crowd, it was then confirmed that Jesus is the source of life.

As our passage starts, we read the reaction of the disciples Who observed Jesus walking on water. "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

Instead of answering the question, Jesus redirected the conversation to the crowd's motive, and perhaps of the disciples, in seeking him. "You were curious about my whereabouts not because you were concerned about my well-being, but because you had the free dinner yesterday."

And Jesus tried to teach them, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give."

Then there was some discussion about food, manna and whether it was Moses or God who gave manna. And what was the food that does not perish? It is Christ himself, who came down from heaven and gives life to the world.

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Jesus said, "whoever" Whoever comes to me! Not just good citizens, but whoever.

There actually was someone who tried to live out that teaching. She was a Catholic sister, Helen Prejean.

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Do you remember the movie "Dead Man Walking"? The movie starts as Sister Helen Prejean visiting Matthew Poncelet. who's on death row for kidnapping, rape, and murder. She has made herself available to him in the most mindful and loving way.

At one scene, she tells him, "You are a son of God, Matthew Poncelet." Visibly touched, he begins to cry, "Nobody ever called me a son of God before. Called me a 'son-of-a -you-know-what' lots of times, but never no son of God. Thank you for loving me."

Sister Helen also visits the parents of the young woman who was murdered. Sitting in their kitchen, she tells them she's come because she wants to be available to them, to help them, to pray with them. They assume her visit means she's no longer involved with Matthew Poncelet, and she has to explain that, to the contrary, she's agreed to be his spiritual advisor.

The parents react with shock. "How can you come here?" the girl's mother says. "Sister, I think you need to leave this house right now!" the father tells her. "You can't have it both ways. You can't befriend that murderer and expect to be our friend too!"

But God can have it both ways, and invites us to embrace both friends and enemies. God holds the both ends of the spectrum. God made Jesus Christ available for the whole world, and like the plain daily bread, invites us to be available for all rich or poor, kind or not so kind.

"I am the bread of life. **Whoever** comes to me will never be hungry, and **whoever** believes in me will never be thirsty."

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Another Illustration:

A lawyer who does social work in New York's Harlem describes a young drug addict whom he has tried to help professionally and personally but without much success: "He is dirty, ignorant, arrogant, dishonest, unemployable, broken, unreliable, ugly, rejected, alone. And he knows it. He knows at last that he has nothing to commend himself to another human being. He has nothing to offer. There is nothing about him which permits the love of another person for him. He is unlovable."

Unlovable by ordinary human beings. But not by God:

For none of us is different from him: Maybe we are not drug addicts. We are not quite dirty as he is. Most of us have respectable jobs. We try to be good citizens and even good Christians. But if we honestly reveal the deep, dark side of us, can we honestly say we are always lovable?

The very fact that we are unlovable, however, points beyond itself to the gospel: and point to God who loves us though we don't fully love back, God loves us though we do not satisfy God's love, God loves us though we do not please God always, God loves us not for our own sake but for God's sake, God loves us freely, God accepts us though we have nothing acceptable to offer. God loves us in spite of ourselves. And God loves even our enemies.

God does NOT love us because we are lovable. God loves us because God is love.

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John described on verse 28 and 29 that the disciples still had questions:

²⁸ Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Believe in HIM:

Let's say you have a friend who is an expert in rock climbing. And you have never done rock climbing before. Your friend shows a picture of rock climbing and said, "I have done it, and I can help you do this, too!" You may say, "I believe you!" That is one level of trust in your friend's judgment. Another level of relationship and trust is... You and your friend are ready to climb. He is in front of you and put his carabiner on your harness and say, "I have done it, and I can help you do this." At that moment, it is no longer, "I believe you." But it is, "I believe IN you." You and your friend are tied up. Your life is in his hand from that point on. And his life also was very closely related to you.

"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Jesus Christ is the daily bread that offers eternal life. Even at this moment, he is offering his life to you and me. Jesus assures us, everyone that God sent to him, will never be driven away. Even at this moment, Jesus is offering all of himself. Take, eat, this is my body broken for you. Will you take me and eat me, digest me? Then I will be a part of you and you will be a part of me. Are you ready to say take my all? Take all of me?

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Do you believe in Jesus?

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My last story is from the perspective of a child....

One Sunday, returning home from church, a father was having the typical what-did-you-do-in Sunday-School-today-conversation with his son who was six years old. The boy said: "My teacher, we made bread together and I ate mine already and it was good." This young boy said something both simple and deep.

"We made bread together." bread: "This is my body broken for you." Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

To make bread together in Christ's name is to make life together. That's what we ought to do. To make bread together, forsaking all differences to build up the body of Christ in love.

The boy then said, "I ate it." This is important, too. To make bread together and then not to eat it is to fail to let it do its silent work in us.

We are nourished in so many ways. Often, we do not understand or remember how we are nourished. Yet, if we take food in, we are changed. Either we get strengthened or we gain weight.

Those children we raise in the church do not quite understand what is going on. But faith becomes a part of them whether they understand how or why.

The boy finished the sentence with "And it was good." Does it sound familiar to you? God said that long time ago. God created the world, God created human beings, and God said **it is good**. We don't make life from nothing as God did. We make life from the things God gave us: flour and salt and milk and one another. But when we do, for us it is the same... it is good.

"My teacher, we made bread together and ate it and it was good."

As we prepare for Thanksgiving ... and one of the big meals we usually have.... Let's feast on, not only the delicious foods but also the LOVE that is represented in those foods: And remember the invitation from Jesus.

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Are you ready to Feast on the Bread of Life? Amen