

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
11th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, August 4, 2024
Scripture: John 6: 24 - 35
Sermon: Eternal Food

Can you name one food that you will find in most, if not all countries in the world, a food that no one country can claim exclusive rights to? A food that you will find at the table of both the richest and the poorest people on earth. The food is BREAD. Bread is served almost everywhere; it has many uses and many forms. Bread is eaten daily; it is not seasonal.

When we lived in Central Asia bread was round called Nan and baked inside a clay oven and put on the side of the oven to bake. The oven was called a "Tandoor." Nan, bread is a necessary staple for the people in Central Asia. Even when they had nothing else to eat but bread and tea. If you had leftover bread you would put it in a plastic bag and hang it from a tree so those who were hungry could eat it. It was considered sacred because it sustained life. The Nan was not very expensive so anyone could afford it and it was baked fresh every day.

One of the things that ties all of humanity together is the need for food. All of us are deeply aware of our need for food and water. When we get hungry, our body tells us.

Last Sunday our scripture lesson was Jesus feeding the 5,000 plus women and children on the hillside. The boy's lunch of 5 Barley Loaves and two fish were enough to satisfy all who were hungry. Jesus blessed the food, and it turned out to be enough for all. When we think we don't have enough God will add his blessings and he will provide but we also need to be willing to be a part of the solution to the problem at hand and trust God to provide.

Now Jesus is going to start calling for a commitment out of the people in verse 29 and the people want more. In verse 29 Jesus is claiming that He was sent from heaven from the Father.

Jesus has already performed an impressive list of miracles including healings, raisings, cleansings, and exorcisms, to say nothing about his

power over the wine, bread, wind, and waves. On the day following the feeding of the 5,000, how can they possibly ask for a sign?

Verse 31 offers a key to their logic, here, as well as the two previous times the Jews asked for a sign. They want a sign from heaven, like Moses gave them with the manna. It is as if they said, "We followed you for earthly food because that is what you miraculously provided. But if you want us to follow you for heavenly food then we will need a sign from heaven." In all three instances, the only sign Jesus promised was that of resurrection.

Yesterday they were willing to inaugurate Jesus as king because he gave them what they wanted. But today, when Jesus asks for their allegiance, they reject him. They demand of Jesus, "If not earthly bread then heavenly bread!" Jesus replied, "It is not I who give, nor was it Moses, but God. He gave manna to your forefathers; but to you he gave me. You ask me to provide heavenly bread, but I am that bread!"

By rejecting Jesus, they are rejecting the very thing they asked Jesus to provide. Jesus is telling us HE came from heaven, sent from God. The bread He offers comes from the finest bakery.

Jesus is telling the crowd He is the perfect spiritual food because He comes from heaven sent by God. What other food can you think of that comes from heaven? Of all the things we do to fill the hunger within us, what else comes from heaven?

The people wanted the manna out of heaven that Moses gave to them. Jesus tells them that Moses did not give them the manna, but that God did (verse 32)!

You need to feed your spirit with Jesus because He is the best food that God has for you! He has Eternal food that gives life!

If you are going to feed your soul, feed it with the spiritual food from heaven! What Jesus has to offer us is the TRUE bread of God!

What makes a great bakery great? They use the best ingredients when they make something. Jesus is the perfect food because he has everything to fill you and satisfy you in mind, body and soul.

When they hear Jesus tell them about the bread they are missing out on, the crowd says they want some. It seems as if the people did not know what Jesus was really offering them and what He was asking them as a result because their mindset was still on the physical food.

Jesus tells them that He is THE bread of life. When Jesus says this He is making an exclusive claim. He is really saying He is the ONLY bread of life that will fill us and give us eternal life.

It has been said, "You are what you eat." This is so true spiritually. What you feed your spirit is what you become.

Junk food is bad for us because it does not have what the body needs, then because our body craves the missing vitamins and minerals; we eat more and more, never being satisfied. We can see that in our world. People keep searching for something or someone that will satisfy them, but it can only be found in Jesus, our Eternal Food.

What are we feeding our spirit? Are we cramming it with junk food or are we starving it to death? Either way is bad. Many people in this world are starving spiritually and they don't even know it.

Jesus has all that we need to be satisfied! In verse 35 Jesus tells us that if we feed ourselves with Him, we will never hunger and never thirst again. Jesus is all that we will need to be satisfied. We will want more Jesus, but we will not need any other food for our spirit.

Jesus is able to nourish our soul and to sustain life. HE will satisfy us. He will energize us, and we will have a desire to learn more and grow closer to Him once we start going to him to be filled.

There is nothing that is more satisfying than serving Jesus.

In verse 29 we are told that we are to believe in Him whom God sent.

To the crowd to believe meant to accept Jesus' competence on the basis of His miracles. To Jesus belief meant commitment to Him not on the basis of miracles, but trusting who He is.

We are to trust Him because He is the Son of God who was sent from heaven to save us.

In verse 36 we are told that the people saw but did not believe. They were not willing to let go of themselves and give themselves over to God!

That was the point with the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. The point was that Jesus tried to focus their attention not so much on their things, not so much on the bread and fish, but on the eternal things. Jesus says that to them. They came to Him wanting to get fed again. They said, "We want more food. We want to be fed again. You did it once, you can do

it again. Jesus says to them, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures unto eternal life."

Jesus says there's more to life than just living. There's more to life than just eating and drinking. There is eternity to be considered.

Jesus reminds them about the bread of life. He says, "This Bread of Life will come to you, which the Spirit then will give you. On Him, God the Father has placed His seal of approval."

The true bread from heaven, which is Christ, lasts forever. The bread from heaven fed the whole world. Manna just fed the children of Israel. Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. This Jesus was the Bread of Life so they would never be hungry.

This is the work of God. To believe in Him, the one who was sent. God's grace changed their lives, and now they did believe. He opened their eyes and they saw Jesus, not as an earthly bread king, but as the true Bread of Life coming down from heaven and one who would provide them with eternal life.

We come back to ourselves, and like the crowd, we look to Jesus and ask Him for things in this life, for things in the here and now. The Lord wants us to expand our horizons and open up our vision to see that there is more to this life than just this life—to look beyond the horizons that we see on this earth and see heaven itself, to look and find that Jesus is our Savior.

The apostle Paul reminds us: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 CORINTHIANS 4:18). We know all those temporary things that sometimes we become attached to and how quickly they can be broken or destroyed. And yet those things that are unseen, that are eternal, are much more precious to us.

Of course the first one is heaven itself. We can't see it yet, it's there. There is a place reserved for each one of us. There are also many more unseen things that God gives us—hope, comfort, joy and peace.

He gives them all to us because of the forgiveness of sins. This too, is unseen but is eternal. And because of that, our lives are changed. We look at our lives in a much different way than many other people. We look at our lives, realizing that yes; there is sadness and sorrow. There is war and

violence in this world, but that does not leave us hopeless or helpless? Does that leave us without comfort? No!

We realize even more so how much Eternal Food is important to us, how much Jesus means to us. In the early church the apostles preached: "You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence"(ACTS 2:28). Yes, Jesus has shown us the day-to-day walk, and now He has shown us the path of life that leads to heaven itself.

Someday each one of us will enjoy eternal life and joy in His presence all because of the love and forgiveness of Jesus because he died and rose again for us. His love endures forever.

There are those in this world who try to diminish the power that Jesus had. They would try to put down all the miracles that He performed. Yet you and I realize and are thankful that God has shown us that His Word endures forever, that His miracles are really a statement of His love for the world and for us as believers. In this miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, we are reminded that He provides us with daily bread and even more with Eternal Food that fills us for eternity with God.

Jesus provides us with spiritual bread and water that leaves us refreshed and satisfied for eternity.

As you come to the Lord's Table today know that Jesus calls us to discipleship and he calls us to be filled with his Spirit so that we will never be hungry nor thirsty because he said, "I am the bread that gives life."

I would like to challenge each one of us to invite someone to church with you that is hungry and thirsty for Spiritual food so they can be filled with the Bread of Life and find rest for their souls into Eternity.