

11th Sunday after Pentecost

John 6: 22-35.

Hymns: 648, 918, 662, 699, 642, 816.

Introit: Psalm 145:10-21.

P All whom You have made will praise You, O LORD. Your devout people will bless You.

C **They will talk about the glory of Your kingdom and speak about Your power,**

P In order to make known to the descendants of Adam the mighty things that He has done, and the glorious grandeur of His kingdom.

C **Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD is faithful in all His works, and gracious in all His deeds.**

P The LORD supports all those who are falling. He raises up all who are bowed down.

C **The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food at the right time.**

P You open Your hand, and You satisfy the desire of every living thing.

C **The LORD is righteous in all His Ways, and faithful in everything that He does.**

P The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.

C **He does whatever those who fear Him desire. He hears their cry and saves them.**

P The LORD watches over all who love Him, but He will destroy all wicked people.

All: **My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD. Let every living creature bless His holy name for ever and ever!**

Collect: Merciful Father, You gave Your Son Jesus as the heavenly bread of life. Grant us faith to feast on Him in Your Word and Sacraments that we may be nourished unto life everlasting; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Exodus 16:2-15.

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-6.

Gospel: John 6:22-35

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before, John 6:22-35.

22 The following day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been no other boat there except one, and that Jesus had not gone into the boat with His disciples, but that His disciples had gone away alone. **23** Other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. **24** When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum, looking for Jesus. **25** When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”

26 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, you are looking for Me, not because you have seen miraculous signs, but because you have eaten the loaves of bread and had your fill. **27** Stop working for the food that spoils, but work for the food that remains for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you! For God, the Father, has set His seal on Him.”

28 Therefore they asked Him, “What are we to do, that we may do the works of God?”

29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom He has sent.”

30 Therefore they asked Him, “So what miraculous sign are You going to perform? Let us see it, that we may believe You! What work are You going to do? **31** Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as Scripture has said: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

32 Then Jesus told them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven. **33** For the Bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34 Therefore they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread!”

35 Jesus told them, “I am the Bread of life. The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,
Peace be with you.

It's been a long time without any rest for Jesus and His disciples. Jesus spent all of the previous day ministering to people in the wilderness. He even multiplied a boy's lunch of bread and fish and used it to feed 5,000 men and their families. Then the disciples spent all night trying to get across the sea against a strong wind and weren't able to cross until Jesus walked to them on the sea. As the day dawned they arrived at the other side of the sea and the people ran all over the countryside to bring the sick and injured to Jesus for healing. There was no stopping ... no letup.

The crowd that Jesus left on the far side of the sea showed up for breakfast, but quickly figured out that Jesus was no longer there. Then some more boats came along, they also came across the water to find Jesus. When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, **"Rabbi, when did You get here?"** They were trying to figure out how Jesus got across the water and back to Capernaum. On the face of it this seems like a fairly innocent question.

Nevertheless, Jesus can look at the heart. He understood that the motive of the crowd was not as innocent as it might seem. **Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I tell you, you are looking for Me, not because you have seen miraculous signs, but because you have eaten the loaves of bread and had your fill. 27 Stop working for the food that spoils, but work for the food that remains for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you! For God, the Father, has set His seal on Him."** Jesus understood that all they were interested in was another free meal. They didn't understand that Jesus came to give eternal life, not just a free breakfast or lunch.

The question and answer session they have with Jesus demonstrates that they simply don't understand. Eventually the crowd asked a question that clearly demonstrated their unbelief. **they asked Him, "So what miraculous sign are You going to perform? Let us see it, that we may believe You! What work are You going to do? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as Scripture has said: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"** Jesus has been healing the sick, curing the lame, causing the deaf to hear and the blind to see. He has been casting out demons and raising people from the dead. This very crowd had eaten bread and fish multiplied from His hand and they still asked for a sign! The stubborn, unbelieving heart is never satisfied. It will always ask for more signs, more handouts, more gifts.

Not much has changed down through the centuries. We might not believe in Jesus for free food, but how many T.V. preachers do you hear that will promise you monetary wealth if you will simply send a seed offering their way? How many preachers will tell you that a life with Jesus means prosperity, success, victory, and so on? Some preachers will tell you that if you get your life right, you will get a better job with more pay and fewer responsibilities ... your children will start to get better grades in school ... your spouse will find you more attractive ... and on and on and on it goes.

Here are just a few of the quotes I found on the Internet: God can cause opportunity to find you. He has unexpected blessings where you suddenly meet the right person, or suddenly your health improves, or suddenly you're able to pay off your house. That's God shifting things in your favour. (Joel Osteen) Obedience to God is the pathway to the life you really want to live. (Joyce Meyer) Poverty is from the devil and that God wants all Christians prosperous. (Benny Hinn) Poverty is caused by sin and disobeying the word of god. (John Hagee) These are just a few of the popular T.V. preachers who teach that worldly wealth and success is the reward for those who obey God.

These very popular people teach about a god who is like a great big vending machine in the sky. You do your part, and then God will give you what you want. The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that we can do nothing, but God, in His grace, freely gives us, not what we want, but what we need. These teachers make promises for life here and now, and, when their promises fail, they teach that you just haven't done it right. God, on the other hand, makes eternal promises, and His promises never fail.

If these teachers are such liars, and their promises fail so often, why are they all so wealthy? Why do they fly in their own private planes and ride in limousines? Why do they live in mansions?

These scam artists are wealthy because the sinful nature is never satisfied with the simplicity of God's perfect gifts. Adam and Eve were not satisfied in Eden. The Israelites in today's Old Testament reading were not satisfied even though God fed them every day. The crowds in today's Gospel wanted just one more sign. The Bible is full of people who were not satisfied by God's promise to them. Our sinful human nature has not changed and many scam artists make their fortune from those who are not satisfied with the gifts God gives in His promises.

So what about us? God has promised to care for us and provide all we need. He has promised eternal salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. He has opened up rivers of forgiveness in word, water, bread and wine. Is God's forgiveness not enough for us?

Think about it. Each and every one of us deserves to suffer in eternal hell. Nevertheless, God sent His Son to take up our humanity and take that eternal hell into Himself as He hung on a cross. He has poured out His righteousness upon us. We have eternal life for the sake of the perfect life, suffering, and death of the Son of God! Furthermore, we have the assurance of all of this by virtue of the immortal, bodily resurrection of that very same Son!

Yet what do faithful pastors hear? "Could you do something to make your message a little more exciting?" "Could you make things a little humorous?" "Could you make things a little more self-affirming?" The eternal Father sent the eternal Son to suffer eternal punishment on the cross so that we could have eternal life, and we aren't satisfied! I've said it before, we want what we want and we want it now, instead of what God wants to give us! It's like God is a chef who wants to serve us a seven course feast, but we sit down and tell Him that we don't want it because we are used to meat and three veg and we prefer that instead.

The devil is more than happy to provide a wide variety of con-artists to give you exactly what you want. He is happy to do this because when he gives you what you want, it will draw you away from what you need. It will draw you away from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord and poison your soul instead. So it's that those who preach lies rake in billions, while those who preach the truth find themselves gathering shopping carts, re-stocking shelves, in order to feed their families. We are willing to pay big bucks to people who tell us the lies even though those lies lead to eternal destruction because those lies make us feel good about ourselves. At the same time, we drive out those who tell us the truth we need for our salvation. It's exactly as the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to write to Timothy. **3 For a time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine. Instead, they will follow their own desires, and, because they have itching ears, they will surround themselves more and more with teachers. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.** [2 Timothy 4:3-4.]

But in spite of the fact that the crowds resisted His message Jesus continued teaching them, **"Truly, truly, I tell you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven.** Here Jesus corrected them. The manna from heaven came from God. Moses was merely God's servant at the time. In fact, all of the signs that Moses did began with God. Moses was a great prophet of God, not because he was anything great, but because God chose him and called him.

Jesus continued, **33 For the Bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."** Here Jesus taught that He Himself is the bread who comes down from heaven. Just as God sent manna to give temporary life to the Israelites as they travelled through the wilderness, so also He sent His Son to give eternal life to all people by His perfect life and sacrificial death on a cross. This is how Jesus is the bread of God who gives life to the world.

The poor crowds are still thinking of their stomachs when they respond, **"Lord, always give us this bread!"** Martin Luther preached about these people and said, ***"This announcement that the Gospel would fill their bellies, that it would provide plentifully for this life and afford a good living, pleases them. They say, as it were: "This would be the man for us. Who would not like him?" We, too, would like such a preacher. They pay no attention to Christ's words to learn where He wants to lead them, but they are happy over the***

prospect that He will fill their bellies and give them only earthly goods and money. But that is not the point. The Gospel does not fill the belly; it has something different to do. Times have not changed. When the Gospel is preached, everyone is eager to reap a sufficient store of earthly goods from it." (Luther's Works, Vol. 23: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John)

But then Jesus said to them, **"I am the Bread of life. The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty.** With these words Jesus made it clear that He is speaking of a different kind of bread for a different kind of life. When it comes to the things of this world Jesus said, **"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."** [Matthew 8:20.] Nevertheless, when it comes to the things of eternity, He said, **The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty".**

These are words that we can never truly understand, but, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can believe in them. Through the gift of faith given by the Holy Spirit, we can believe in them and in the Christ who said them. By that gift of faith, we can believe that Jesus is eternal food and drink who will keep us alive with Him in eternity. For just as Jesus rose from the dead, so also will the Holy Spirit raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

God, in His infinite knowledge and perfect wisdom, will give us, not what we want, but exactly what He knows we need ... both here in time and forever in eternity. **If God is for us, who can be against us? 32He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?** [Romans 8:31–32.] Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

3rd HYMN, 662,

Prayer of the Church 11th Sunday after Pentecost

P Confident that our Lord hears us and provides for all our needs of body and soul, let us pray.

Brief Silence.

P For the faithful proclamation of God's eternal Word, that the body of Christ grow and mature, and be built up in love, Lord in Your mercy,

C here our prayer.

P For the Christian Church, that God guard her against constant grumbling, so that she might repent and rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, Lord in Your mercy,

C **here our prayer.**

P For the pastors of the AELC and their families, and for all who serve this Parish, that in all things, they speak the truth in the love of God and be faithful in their witness, Lord in Your mercy,

C **here our prayer.**

P For our Prime minister and all who govern in our land, that they never forget their accountability to God, but use the authority entrusted to them honorably and for the good of the people, Lord in Your mercy,

C **here our prayer.**

P For those who suffer from poverty, homelessness, unemployment, or hunger, that God provide their daily bread, show mercy, preserve and relieve them; and that He be their strong deliverer and guide them through the wilderness of this life, Lord in Your mercy,

C **here our prayer.**

P For those who are sick, suffering from chronic pain, or undergoing surgery [*including*], that God grant them healing and the strength to bear their infirmities with patience and grace, Lord in Your mercy,

C **here our prayer.**

P For those who mourn, that they not lose hope, but always labour for the food that endures to eternal life, Lord in Your mercy,

C **here our prayer.**

P For our families on earth, that they reflect Your Fatherly care. Bless all whom You have joined as husband and wife, that our marriages become a constant reflection of Your love for Your Church. Fill parents with the desire and the wisdom to raise their children in the Holy Christian Church, and fill children with honour and respect for the parents You have given to them. Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P Lord, Your Son provided for the needs of the people by feeding thousands with just a few loaves of bread. Provide for our needs today. Our Nation is so dry, stock and crops are failing. Framers and their families are going to the wall. Send rain and sun in the right measure and just the right time so that crops might abound and every hungry mouth be fed not just here but also around the world.

Lord, in Your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

P For those who partake in the Lord's Supper, that the bread of life strengthen them in body and soul to eternal life, Lord in Your mercy,

C **here our prayer.**

P Merciful Father, through your Son Jesus Christ, you have graciously promised that those who believe would never hunger or thirst. Deliver us from all human cunning, from Satan's deceitful schemes, and from all evil which would cause us to stray from the precious teaching handed down by Your apostles. Teach us to love our neighbor, that we might always build each other up, care for one another, and pray for the whole communion of saints, that in steadfast faith, we may be gathered together before the Lamb in the midst of His throne, to give glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit now and forever.

C **Amen.**

4th Hymn: 699,