

**JESUS, THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN**  
**Sermon for the 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, 2021**  
**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 our sermon today is our Gospel read before John 6:22-35: <sup>22</sup> **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.** <sup>23</sup> **Other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.** <sup>24</sup> **When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum, looking for Jesus.** <sup>25</sup> **When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”**

<sup>26</sup> **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.** <sup>27</sup> **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.”**

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

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

<sup>30</sup> **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?”** <sup>31</sup> **Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as Scripture has said: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”**

<sup>32</sup> **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.** <sup>33</sup> **For the Bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”**

<sup>34</sup> **Therefore, they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread!”**

<sup>35</sup> **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 through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It had been a while since Jesus and His disciples could have a rest. The previous day, Jesus had spent His time ministering to people in the wilderness, even feeding thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Then He had compelled the disciples to hop on a boat in which they spent all night trying to get across the sea against a strong wind. They 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.<sup>1</sup> There was no stop or letup for Him: no time for rest.

The crowd that Jesus had left on the far side of the sea showed up for breakfast but quickly figured out that Jesus was no longer there. When some more boats came along, they also came across the water and found Jesus. They asked Him, **“Rabbi, when did You get here?”** They were trying to figure out how Jesus got across the water and back to Capernaum. This seemed like a fairly innocent question since they had not seen Him leave the other shore.

Nevertheless, Jesus can look at the heart. He understood that the motive of the crowd was not as innocent as it may have seemed. **“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.** <sup>27</sup> **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 they were just interested in another free meal and did not understand that Jesus had come to give eternal life, not just a free breakfast or lunch.

The question-and-answer session they had with Jesus demonstrated that they didn't understand. Eventually, the crowd asked a question that clearly showed their unbelief, **“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?”** <sup>31</sup> **Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as Scripture has said: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”** When hearts grow hard in unbelief, no miracle is enough to change that condition. Jesus had been healing the sick, curing the lame, and causing the deaf to hear and the blind to see. He had been casting out demons and raising people from the dead. This very crowd had eaten bread and fish multiplied from His hand, and yet, they still asked for a sign. Refusing to acknowledge Jesus' spiritual message, they cleverly alluded to the manna from heaven that their ancestors ate under Moses in the wilderness. It's as if they were saying: *“If you're serious about getting us to believe you, then at least do something on a par with what Moses did. He gave the entire nation manna from heaven for 40 years. You started with existing food and fed a much smaller group.”* The stubborn, unbelieving heart is never satisfied. It will always ask for more signs.

Not much has changed down through the centuries. While we may not believe in Jesus for free food, yet many people today only want in Him someone who will fill their bellies. Think of all those false preachers today - you see a lot of them on television -

<sup>1</sup> Mark 6:45-56

teaching that if you have a life with Jesus, then expect to have a life with prosperity, success, victory, and so forth. Some preachers will even 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. The point is that many preachers 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. Well that is not what Scripture says. It teaches that we can do nothing, but God, in His grace, freely gives us not what **we want** but what **we need**. These false teachers make promises for life here and now, *and*, when their promises fail, they teach that they just haven't done it right. God, on the other hand, makes eternal promises, and His promises never fail. Why isn't it enough to believe that?

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.

How 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, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* Paul writes (Romans 3:23), and yet, God has 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! This eternal message of the Gospel is for all, and yet, so many are not satisfied! Many want what they want instead of **what God wants** to give them! It is like God is a chef who wants to serve a seven-course feast, but people sit down and tell Him that they don't want it because they are used to eating something rancid on mouldy bread and prefer that. How foolish!

The devil is more than happy to provide the world with an alternative to God's free grace through His Son. He is more than happy to provide a variety of con-artists to give us exactly what **we** want. He is happy to do this because when he gives us what we **want**, it draws us away from what we **need**. It draws us away from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord and poisons our souls instead. So it is that those who preach lies live in comfort and safety, while those who preach the truth find themselves often sitting on the outer and being told that the message we bring is one the world does not want to hear. It's amazing how many are willing to pay big bucks to churches that 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 is exactly as the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to write to Timothy, *"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. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths"* (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

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 had come 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 had chosen and called him.

Jesus continued, **"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 had sent manna to give temporary life to the Israelites as they travelled through the wilderness, so also He had 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."*<sup>2</sup>

But then **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."** With these words Jesus had made it clear that He was speaking of a different kind of bread for a different kind of life. The feeding of the 5000 with bread multiplied beyond measure was just a foretaste of the feast to come, a picture of what Jesus was up to, a sneak preview of the coming attraction. That deep hunger that

<sup>2</sup> Luther's Works, Vol. 23: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John.

we feel – no bread from this world can fill it. That deep thirst in our souls that leaves us restless and thirsting for something more – no drink in this world can quench it.

Jesus once said, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness! For they will be filled*” (Matthew 5:6). Come to Jesus, the Bread of Life. Eat and drink of Him by faith in His Word. Hear His Word of forgiveness. Eat and drink the bread of His Body, the wine of His Blood, the gifts of His cross. He won’t let us down. He won’t leave us hungry for more. He won’t make us thirsty. Trust Him. He is true Food, the likes of which cannot be found anywhere else. He is true Drink. The deepest longings of our souls will find strength, and nourishment, and refreshment in Him. Trust Him, and we shall not hunger. Trust Him, and we shall not thirst. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty and everlasting God, since nothing is hidden before You, and since all hearts are laid bare before You, give us true humility, reverence, and repentance as we now come before Your throne of grace. Do not remember our many sins, but only Your kindness and constant love in Jesus Christ our Lord. We praise You for fulfilling Your eternal election of grace by sending Your Son Jesus Christ to shed His blood, the blood of the covenant, as our Saviour from sin. We praise You for giving us Your Holy Spirit to renew and help us day by day, to produce the results of Your grace.

Rule us by Your Holy Spirit that we may not give way to the evils of idolatry, sexual impurity, unbelief, and other great and shameful sins. Give us a living faith, which will enable us to stand firm at all times, and keep us from grumbling, doubt, or despair. Strengthen us whenever we are tempted, so that we may successfully resist Satan’s power.

Help us all to believe Your Word and to heed its warnings, so that we may always do what is right, and live in the faith that leads to eternal life. Increase our hope of seeing Your glory.

We thank You for Your countless blessings in our lives. Help us to use them faithfully and responsibly as good stewards of Your varied gifts, as people who are grateful for all Your love.

Bless Your Church, O Father, so that Your name may be hallowed and Your kingdom may come. Continue to lead Your people to Jesus Christ their rock, and refresh them with the water of life. Equip Your people to proclaim Your truth with wisdom, love, and boldness, so that many more from all nations may call on Your name and be saved.

Convince the people in our country that righteousness makes a nation great, and that sin brings disgrace. Keep its people in Your care, so that honesty, uprightness, truth, and high moral principles may flourish, and all lawlessness, evil, and defiance of authority may be put down. We ask Your special blessing on all who govern, that they may have wisdom to rule according to Your direction.

Guard and protect our homes. Unite parents in mutual love and godliness. Enable them to rule their children well and bring them up in truth and righteousness.

We pray for those who are sick in body, mind, or spirit, for all who are in any danger; for all who are experiencing worry, doubts, disappointments, or defeat. Help them in their troubles, and save them, for Your mercy’s sake.

Heavenly Father, You did not even hold back Your Son, but gave Him up for us all; with Him freely give us all things and hear our prayers. And to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 16:2-15

<sup>2</sup> The whole congregation of the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> The Israelites said to them: “If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt! Then we sat around the pots of meat and ate all the food that we wanted! However, You have brought us into this wilderness to starve this whole assembly to death!”

<sup>4</sup> Then the LORD told Moses: “Look! I shall rain bread down from heaven for you. Then each day the people shall go out and gather a daily quantity for that day, that I may test them, to see whether they will live according to My Instructions or not! <sup>5</sup> However, on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it shall be twice as much as they gather on every other day!”

<sup>6</sup> So, Moses and Aaron spoke to all the Israelites: “In the evening, you will know that the LORD has brought you out

of the land of Egypt <sup>7</sup> and in the morning, you will see the glory of the LORD. For He has heard your grumbling against the LORD. Who are we, that you are grumbling against us?” <sup>8</sup> Moses also said: “You will know this when He gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you need to satisfy yourselves in the morning. For the LORD has heard your grumbling against Him. Who are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.”

<sup>9</sup> Then Moses told Aaron: “Tell the whole congregation of the Israelites: ‘Come near before the LORD! For He has heard your grumbling.’”

<sup>10</sup> While Aaron was speaking to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they turned toward the wilderness, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. <sup>11</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses, <sup>12</sup> “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight, you will eat meat, and, in the morning, you will have all the bread you need to

satisfy you! Then you will know that I am the LORD, your God.”

<sup>13</sup> That evening quails came up and settled over the camp, and the next morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. <sup>14</sup> When the layer of dew evaporated, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was something fine and scale-like, as fine as frost, on the ground. <sup>15</sup> When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, “What is that?”

For they did not know what it was. Moses told them: “That is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

Ephesians 4:1-16

<sup>1</sup> As a prisoner in the Lord, I urge you to live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called. <sup>2</sup> Be humble and gentle in every way, be patient and bear with one another in a loving way! <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace! <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit — just as God has called you to one hope — <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all. <sup>7</sup> However, grace has been given to each one of us as Christ, who has given it, has measured it out. <sup>8</sup> That is why the Scripture says, “When He went up on high, He led many captives and gave gifts to people.” <sup>9</sup> Now what can “He went up” mean except that He also had gone down to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who went down also “went up” above all the heavens, to fill everything. <sup>11</sup> He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> His purpose was to prepare God’s holy people, to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all become one in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become mature, until we reach the full height of Christ. <sup>14</sup> His purpose was that we might not be babies any longer, tossed and driven by every doctrinal wind, by the trickery of people and by their clever and deceitful scheming to lead us astray. <sup>15</sup> Instead, His purpose is that, as we speak the truth with love, we may grow up into Him who is the Head, namely, Christ. <sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together and unites it by every ligament that supports it; and to the extent that each and every part is doing its work, He makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love.

John 6:22-35

<sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> Other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum, looking for Jesus. <sup>25</sup> When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”

<sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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.”

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

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

<sup>30</sup> 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?” <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as Scripture has said: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> For the Bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

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

<sup>35</sup> 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.”