

**I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE**  
**Sermon for the 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, 2021**  
**John 6:35-51**

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 6:35-51: <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. <sup>36</sup> However, I have told you both that you have seen Me and that you do not believe. <sup>37</sup> Everything that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and I shall certainly not cast out the person who comes to Me, <sup>38</sup> because I have come down from heaven, not that I may do My will but the will of Him who has sent Me. <sup>39</sup> This is also the will of the One who has sent Me, that I should not lose anything of what He has given Me, but that I should raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and that I should raise him on the last day.”**

<sup>41</sup> **The Jews therefore grumbled because He said, “I am the Bread that has come down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup> They asked, “Is this not Jesus, Joseph’s son, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”**

<sup>43</sup> **Jesus answered them, “Stop grumbling among yourselves! <sup>44</sup> A person can come to Me only if the Father, who has sent Me, draws him, and I shall raise him on the last day. <sup>45</sup> The prophets wrote: ‘God will teach everyone.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me. <sup>46</sup> Not that anyone has seen the Father. Only He who comes from God has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I tell you, the one who believes in Me has eternal life.**

<sup>48</sup> **“I am the Bread of Life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died. <sup>50</sup> This is the Bread coming down from heaven, that anyone may eat from it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living Bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live for ever, and the Bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world.”**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is the second of three straight Sundays in which the Holy Gospel is a portion of Jesus’ “Bread of Life” discourse from John chapter 6. Several times in this chapter, Jesus declares, **“I am the Bread of life,”** which is the theme running through this chapter. Last week we heard Jesus say, *“My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world”* (John 6:32-33). Now He says, **“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.”**

Why does Jesus use this phrase, **“the Bread of life”**? Keep in mind, Jesus had just miraculously fed thousands of hungry people from only five loaves of bread and two fish.<sup>1</sup> So bread was on everybody’s mind. Jesus wanted to direct those minds away from not just the bread that fills the belly for a day, but more than that, to the true Bread that gives life to both body and soul for eternity because that is the gift Jesus comes to give.

**“I am the Bread of life,”** says Jesus. Why bread? Because bread, across all cultures, is universally seen as the staple of life. It is that which gives and sustains life. Without bread, which is kind of shorthand for food in general - without bread, without food, without sustenance, we die. This is true in the physical realm, and when Jesus applies this term to Himself, it’s true in the spiritual realm as well. Without the Bread of life, that is, without Jesus, we die, and it would be death forever, apart from Christ.

So we need the life that Jesus gives. We need this more than anything else in the world. Jesus is the only One who can give us this life. Jesus is the only One who can sustain this life. That is why He says, **“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.”**

This is why Jesus comes. He says, **“... I have come down from heaven, not that I may do My will but the will of Him who has sent Me.”** Note that and mark it well. Jesus Christ has come down from heaven to do the will of His heavenly Father. This tells us that Jesus is the very Son of God, the eternal Son of God from before the foundation of the world<sup>2</sup>, who at a certain point in human history has come down from heaven and become incarnate, has become one of us in the flesh, for us men and for our salvation. This is why Jesus has come.

<sup>1</sup> Mark 6:30-44

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 1:20

The crowd back then didn't get it. They could only think of this man Jesus as the person growing up in the home of Joseph and Mary. **"How can He now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"** they asked. But that is the mystery of the incarnation, and only God can reveal Jesus to us as the divine Saviour sent from heaven. Jesus says as much: **"A person can come to Me only if the Father, who has sent Me, draws him."** This happens as God's Word works repentance and faith in our hearts so that we know we need a Saviour, and we discover that Jesus is the very One who meets that need. God's Word is at work in our hearts so that we know and feel our sins, we recognise our need for forgiveness, and we hear that Jesus gives us just that.

**"I am the Bread of Life,"** Jesus tells the crowd. **"Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died."<sup>50</sup> This is the Bread coming down from heaven, that anyone may eat from it and not die.** We can eat the healthiest food in the world. We can go on all sorts of diets. We can eat high-fibre foods, whole grains, food that is healthy for the heart, gluten-free, and on it goes. However, no matter what we eat, we are still going to die one day. What then? As the Apostle Paul asks, *"Who will rescue me from this body, which is bringing death?"* (Romans 7:24).

Who will do this? Paul himself gives the answer, and what an answer it is! *"Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Romans 7:25). It is Jesus. He's the One. **"I am the Bread of Life,"** He says. *"I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10). How does He give us this life? How does He meet our greatest need? Jesus tells us: **"the Bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world."** Jesus gives life to the world by giving His life for the world. This is the heart of the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus gives His life, so that you and I and the rest of the world may have life.

Jesus did this on the cross. There He offered the perfect sacrifice that covers the sins of the whole world. *"Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,"* John the Baptist says (John 1:29). This is God's supreme solution to our deepest and most pressing problem: our sin, which results in death and eternal damnation under God's judgment. Jesus takes all that from us. He gives His flesh into death, taking our place under that judgment. He lifts that load off our shoulders and takes it on His own. In His flesh, in His body on the cross, He has borne our sins. By His blood, the holy precious blood He has shed on our behalf, all our sins are forgiven. They are no longer held against us. Jesus atones for them all. We are free, at peace with God, for Christ's sake. And we know that God the Father has accepted full payment because He has raised His Son from the dead. Believe it. It's true. It's the truest and most freeing thing we shall ever hear.

And what is the result? Now we have life. New life. *Eternal life.* Jesus says, **"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."** And again: **"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life."** And again: **"I am the living Bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever, and the Bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world."**

Everlasting life. How good does that sound? If it were just an endless continuation of the heartaches and sorrows we suffer now in this vale of tears, that would not be so great. But the life that Jesus gives is much better than that. It will be life with no more tears, no more sorrow, no more sin or death.<sup>3</sup> This is the eternal life that Jesus gives, and we have the sure hope of it *even now* in the blessings Jesus showers upon us. We have the joy of the Lord *now*. Now we have the peace that passes all understanding, standing guard over our hearts and minds.<sup>4</sup> We have a new ability to love and forgive others *now*, to strip off the old self and to put on the new self, and to live in love, as we heard about in the Second Reading today from Ephesians.<sup>5</sup> Sealed with the Holy Spirit<sup>6</sup>; beloved children of our heavenly Father; new persons in Christ. All this belongs to the new life we have *now*, the life that Christ freely gives us.

This is life that will overcome the grave. The body we lay in the grave will rise one day, on the day when Christ returns, that is, on the Last Day. Notice how Jesus repeats this promise in today's reading. He says: **"This is also the will of the One who has sent Me, that that I should not lose anything of what He has given Me, but that I should raise it up on the last day."**<sup>40</sup> **For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and that I should raise him on the last day."** And again Jesus says: **"A person can come to Me only if the Father, who has sent Me, draws him, and I shall raise him on the last day."**

Several times Jesus speaks of a resurrection on the last day. Jesus here is talking about the bodily resurrection on the day when He will return. Our physical bodies will be raised up glorious and perfect, no longer subject to disease or death.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 21:4

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 4:7

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 4:17-5:2

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13

When? On the last day. This is our great hope, the return of Christ and the resurrection of the body. This is what we confess in the Creed when we say we believe in “the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.”

God’s Word teaches throughout about the physical, bodily resurrection of the dead on the last day, and these repeated promises of Jesus in our text today are the prime examples. Jesus will raise and give life to our dead bodies on the last day, which in turn will be the first day of our new life everlasting in a restored creation, a renewed heaven and earth where righteousness will be at home. There we shall dwell with God, and see Him, along with all the saints from ages past, all the believers of all time, in perfect fellowship and harmony and superabundant joy! What a hope! What a thing to look forward to! This is the life that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has won for us and gives to us purely out of His grace and mercy. Trust in Jesus. The gift is ours.

**“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.”** Here is Jesus’ promise for us today. Jesus truly is **“the Bread of life.”** Amen.

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

#### PRAYER FOR THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Heavenly Father, we come before You in prayer and praise, confident that You will hear our cries; because You are full of compassion and pity, not easily angered, and show great love and faithfulness to every generation.

Bless the work of Your Holy Spirit among us through Your Word and Sacraments. Turn us away from sin in true repentance, and help us to look to Jesus for forgiveness and for daily grace to do what pleases You. Provide faithful preachers and teachers of Your truth in Your Church, and make Your people eager to hear and learn it. Fill us with love and trust in You. Save us in all the battles we must wage, and uphold us in all our needs.

Strengthen Christians throughout the world constantly to confess that Jesus is Lord, to Your glory. Empower them to proclaim that it is Jesus who rescues them from the punishment that they deserve for their sin. Give to each one of us all those gifts of the Spirit that are necessary for our witness to Christ. Fill us all with wisdom and joy to use those gifts for the good of all. Enable the light of the Gospel to penetrate the darkness of this world, so that people everywhere may rejoice in Your salvation.

May this Your house always be a house of prayer. Cleanse it of all unrighteousness, that it may be a place where Your glory dwells, Your name is hallowed, and Your Word is taught faithfully.

Keep the nations of the earth in peace. Turn people’s hearts everywhere away from war, terrorism, and other wickedness. We pray, in particular, for those who are our country’s leaders. Grant that our liberties may be kept safe, our laws upheld, injustice suppressed, and lawlessness punished. Bless all honest and useful work in industry, agriculture, education, science, the professions, and the arts. If you give us prosperity, let us never forget You.

May the words of our Lord Jesus be treasured daily in our homes, so that both young and old may grow in grace, and follow Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

If you cause us to pass through difficult times, grant that we may cling to Your mercy, and seek your gracious purposes in them. Look in mercy on the sick, the suffering, the poor, the bereaved, the handicapped, and the unemployed, and hear their cry. Bless them with Your powerful love, that they may turn to You, to praise Your holy name.

Hear and grant these and all other prayers, O Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and rules, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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

1 Kings 19:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done and especially that he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, “May the gods deal severely with me and even worse than that if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like the life of one of them!”

<sup>3</sup> When he was aware of this, Elijah set out and fled for his life. He came to Beer-Sheba, which belongs to Judah

and left his servant there. <sup>4</sup> Elijah himself went into the wilderness a day’s journey. He came and sat down under a broom tree and asked that he might die. He said: “It is enough now, LORD. Take away my life! For I am no better than my fathers.”

<sup>5</sup> He lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Then suddenly an angel was there, touching him. He told him: “Get up and eat!”

<sup>6</sup> When Elijah looked, there, near his head, was a bread-cake on hot stones and a jar of water. So, he ate and

drank and lay down again. <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him. He said: "Get up and eat! Otherwise your journey will be too much for you."

<sup>8</sup> Elijah got up and ate and drank. Then, on the energy from that food, he travelled for forty days and forty nights, as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

Ephesians 4:17-5:2

<sup>17</sup> So, I tell you and call on you in the Lord, not to live any longer like the Gentiles. Their minds are set on worthless things. <sup>18</sup> Their understanding is darkened. Their natural state of ignorance, caused by their closed minds, has made them strangers to the life that God gives. <sup>19</sup> Having become callous, they have given themselves over to a life of lust, to practise every kind of vice with a constant desire for more. <sup>20</sup> However, that is not what you learned when you came to know Christ, <sup>21</sup> if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> You were taught to strip off your old self, which follows your former ways of living and ruins you, as it follows the desires that deceive you. <sup>23</sup> Instead, you were taught to be continually renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, which is created to be like God, truly righteous and holy. <sup>25</sup> Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak the truth to his neighbour! For we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry without sinning! Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the Devil a foothold! <sup>28</sup> He who has been stealing must not steal any longer! Instead, he must work hard, doing something good with his own hands, that he may have something to share with anyone in need! <sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up where they need it, that it may impart grace to those who listen! <sup>30</sup> Do not grieve God's Holy Spirit, by whom you were sealed for the day when you will be set free! <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling and slander, along with every way of hurting one another! <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you!

<sup>5:1</sup> Therefore, imitate God, as His dearly loved children, <sup>2</sup> and live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us as a "fragrant offering and sacrifice" to God!

John 6:35-51

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