

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 6:24-35 (Proper 13)

The next day, when the people who remained after the feeding of the five thousand saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” 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. **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.” **Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?”** Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” 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? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” 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.** For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” **They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”**

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.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Sermon

Faye makes me a sandwich for lunch when I go to work. Eating cold cuts and mustard on whole wheat bread is definitely the highlight of my day!

Did you know that in America, about 150 million adults, plus me, eat a sandwich a day? That's a lot of bread!

In last week's Gospel, Jesus performed a miracle. He fed 5,000 people with only five loaves of bread and two fishes.

In today's Gospel, Jesus and His disciples are crossing back to the other side of Galilee. When the crowd sees that Jesus has left, they follow Him again.

This free food stuff is great! Jesus knows this and calls out to them, “you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”

Then Jesus tells them not to rely on this food that perishes, “but for the food that endures to eternal life.”

For Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

We are all hungry.

Everyone hungers for something. Something that will nourish our souls, something that will fill our loneliness, something that will satisfy our need for living.

Everyone is looking for their bread of life. The problem is what kind of bread are we eating? Do we eat the bread of having to be right and getting our way, or do we eat the bread of resentment, revenge, guilt or sorrow?

I am watching a Japanese series on Netflix called “Samurai Gourmet.” It is the story of a newly retired businessman who worked his entire life for a big corporation, and who is struggling to come to terms with his new position in life. In every episode, he satisfies his physical appetite with delicious Japanese food, ramen, yakiniku, beer, even natto and rice! But he also realizes that the food he is eating is filling an emotional hunger.

In one especially touching episode, while he is eating grilled mackerel for breakfast, the taste of the fish suddenly reminds him of a summer day he spent at the beach with his friends, when he was a happy and carefree teenager, when he could eat bowls and bowls of rice without worrying about his diet!

His bread of life was the memory of his youth.

And Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

Jesus offers to give freely the food of eternal life.

Oftentimes, we can't hear Jesus clearly.

We demand a lot from him, we doubt and question how, when, where, and who He is, and why He came to where we are.

So many people live, or rather exist, without the food of hope.

They are gaunt from lack of sustenance. Some search for someone or something that will make all their troubles and pain disappear. Others gorge themselves on material goods only to discover their hunger for more and more stuff is never satisfied. Many live their lives separated from an old friend after an age old argument, separated from their parents, their spouse, or their children. Many live their lives separated from God.

A person can survive a long time on only bread and water. But how long can they survive without God?

Just as bread is a staple we rely on, Jesus is a staple in our lives. Once we believe in Jesus, once we start ingesting and taking him into our lives, we will live our lives differently.

God knows that we need to be in relationships to be fully human.

God knows how fragile our lives are.

God knows we need to be continually fed.

In Jesus, God leaves us a trail of bread to lead us home.

You see, when we take these pieces of bread, we take in hope, peace, and unconditional love. We come to realize that maybe, for the first time, the very essence of this bread of life means that there is no disagreement, no argument, no sin big enough to keep God from loving us.

This bread is not only an invitation to life, it is life.

So today, come humbly and thankfully to this altar and receive the bread of life that ensures eternal life. Come to Christ and ease your hunger.

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

Amen.