

The Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost
August 16, 2009
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

John 6:24-35

Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then 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. (NIV)

"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10) an expert in the law once asked Jesus trying to test Him. Another time a young rich ruler asked the same question of Jesus saying: *"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18)* *"How can a man be born when he is old?" (John 3)* asked a Pharisee named Nicodemus who approached Jesus at night wondering how one can enter the kingdom of God. *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16)* cried out the jailer who was ready to take his own life to Paul and Silas.

There is in every single person by nature a sinful notion that there is something we can do to earn our salvation. There is the false idea that by our works and actions we can gain God's favor. There is an opinion that we can perform these works to win forgiveness and thus eternal life. This is a common misunderstanding. This is the worst kind of misunderstanding because instead of leading to life it leads to death - death eternal.

Thankfully, God sent Jesus to set us straight. Jesus gives us the words that set us on the only path to life. Listen to Jesus' Word today as He teaches us about priorities. Listen to Jesus' Word as He clears up for us some common and dangerous misunderstandings. Today, I pray each of us walks away knowing the vital truth that: **It is all about faith in the Savior Jesus.**

Do you agree with this statement? Many people follow and claim to have faith in Jesus, but they have a somewhat misguided faith and follow Jesus for the wrong reasons. While you may agree or not with that statement today, it was most certainly the case in our text. Many people had just witnessed Jesus feed thousands of people, over 5000 men alone, with just 5 loaves of bread and two small fish. Amazed by this the people wanted to make Jesus a king by force so Jesus got his disciples out of there and later

Jesus joined them. But this did not stop some of the crowds who were in hot pursuit of Jesus.

We read: ***“Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, ‘‘Rabbi, when did you get here?’’*** Since Jesus did not leave with His disciples or get on a boat when the people find Him they ask how He got there. Perhaps they think Jesus can update them on His latest miracle? These people were clearly following Jesus for the wrong reasons. They missed the main point of Jesus’ miracles. They failed to realize Jesus had something much better to give to them. ***“Jesus answered, ‘‘I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.’’***”

Jesus, with a miraculous meal, had satisfied a physical, earthly need and they wanted more. Jesus satisfied their hunger and now they want Jesus as king. But Jesus tells them to not to work for food that spoils. No doubt food, especially in the hot Mediterranean sun spoils, but Jesus was talking about more than just food. He is teaching about all earthly things. Jesus came for their spiritual welfare, but most of the people could not look past their physical and bodily welfare. Jesus came to provide forgiveness and life eternal, but the majority cared more about their daily bread.

It was said of the Italian dictator Mussolini that whatever brutal and inhumane actions characterized his rule, nevertheless, he kept the trains running on time. Isn’t it like our sinful nature to look the other way as long as some of our selfish desires are satisfied? In our Old Testament lesson the Israelites said they would go back to being slaves if their bellies were full. The people here want a Jesus who could keep the gravy train coming - a Jesus who could provide instant food and healing.

Do we ever fall into the same trap of failing to look past our daily bread to what Jesus really came to offer us? Think about this for a minute. Would you rather have Jesus give you (A) a million dollars or (B) forgiveness for your sins? Would we want God to give to us today a gift of (A) a \$500,000 house and a \$50,000 car or (B) the gift of baptism? Would we be more pleased if Jesus gave us (A) popularity, fame, and perfect health or (B) His own body and blood, in, with, and under bread and wine?

If we chose option A for any of those we would chose foolishly. How easy it can become to turn to God and follow Jesus for the wrong reasons. Jesus warns what good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul. All those things are food that spoils, yet how much time do we spend chasing after and setting our hearts and minds on earthly things. Jesus says instead to work for food that will not spoil, but is for eternal life. That is the food Jesus came to give. Jesus came not just to be a teacher. He came not just to be a healer or provider. He came to be the Savior from sin. It is all about faith in the Savior Jesus.

Yet, some still missed the reason Jesus came. They missed the words that the Son of Man came to *give* them this food and so they ask: ***“What must we do to do the works God requires?”*** Again back to the false idea that we can do something that would please God, that there is some class of works that will satisfy a holy God. But a holy God requires nothing less than holiness. To fall short of perfection is to fail and to fail is to fall under God’s condemnation. But that is why Jesus came for us sinners. Jesus sets

everyone straight, once and for all, on what God requires with this answer: ***"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."***

What work does God demand? How does one inherit eternal life? How can I be saved? It is all about faith in Jesus. It is all about believing in the One He sent. It is all about trusting in Christ. This truly is the work of God. The work God accomplishes through nothing more than simple water connected to His Word. The work God does through the good news that Jesus lived for you - that Jesus died on the cross for your sins - that Jesus rose from the dead so you can have eternal life. God works through His Word. The more we are in His Word the more we see it is not mainly a book that says "do," it is a Word that says: "done." The Holy Spirit's main objection is not just to get us to "try," but what He wants to work is "trust." ***"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*** It is all about faith in the Savior Jesus.

Still the people could not take their eyes and hearts off of earthly things and they ask: ***"What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*** They basically say Moses gave the people bread from heaven every day so what will you do Jesus. Jesus starts by first of all saying that it was not Moses but God who gave that bread and then Jesus says ***"For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*** When the people say give this bread to us, Jesus declares: ***"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."***

Dear friends, there is nothing in this world that is more important than Jesus. He is more important than gold, food, fame, health, power or glory. Only Jesus can satisfy. Jesus alone is the food that will never spoil. Only He can give us what we need to never be hungry or thirsty again. He is the bread of life. He is the "I am" eternal God who came to suffer, bleed & die for sinners; for you so that you could have a never-ending unlimited supply of God's forgiveness and love. Now you can have true life and glory and an inheritance that will never perish spoil or fade kept in heaven for you. All these blessings are ours through faith in Christ Jesus.

That is what it is all about. Do not get sidetracked by what this world and the devil have to offer. Do not put all your time and energy working for food that spoils. Jesus offers so much more. He is the bread of life. He is the answer to all of our important questions. Jesus has done for us what we have not nor could ever do and now, by God's grace, our eyes are opened to see what matters the most. Follow Jesus and put your faith in Him as much more than just a bread king. It is all about faith in the Savior Jesus. Amen.

