

The Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost
August 8, 2021
Sermon by Pastor Cindy Bullock

The holy gospel according to John.

³⁵Jesus said to [the crowd,] “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ⁴¹Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴²They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” ⁴³Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Grace to you and peace from God our father and our lord and savior, Jesus Christ.

On Wednesday night of last week, Brian and I met some friends for dinner at the patio of WA Frost. It was a perfect evening, cool and clear. One of those summer evenings that Minnesota is loved for – and a great time to be outside for dinner. I ended up ordering the “pasta special” which consisted of a bowl of pasta with pork and squash and tomatoes on top. And somehow on that beautiful evening, with friends and conversation, it became a magic bowl of pasta. Kind of like Strega Nona’s pasta pot. The more I ate the more there was! By the time we finished dinner, I was full, and had enough for two more meals besides.

Now we can talk about restaurants and portion sizes, but I’d rather talk about what it means to be filled. And filled with more than food. That night we feasted on conversation – catching up about the kids and grandkids, how our lives have changed, what is happening in life and work and the world. We drank our fill of a summer evening in the city with people and joy all around us.



Think of a time when you were filled with more than food – filled with life. Maybe a time when you were filled with purpose and just the right skill to get something done, and it felt so right. Or

when you were filled to bursting with pure joy – dancing around your house. When you were filled with deep gratitude, more than you could express. Or a time spent with friends or family that filled you with contentment. Remember yourself at such a time. I'll give you a moment to think.

This is what it feels like to be filled with the bread of life. But sadly, these moments are so fleeting. They end. And we have to get up the next day, and go into life, school, work, volunteering, paying bills, cleaning the house, getting places on time, solving problems. Soon enough, that feeling of being full is gone, and we're hungry again. And not just for bread.



There is much more than bread to be hungry for. So, I'll ask a second question. As you live your days, what do you hunger for? What do you hope for, ache for, need at the deepest level. And when you think of something, ask yourself, what is behind that hunger? You might say, "I so want to be done with COVID!! But why? What is beneath that? Take a moment to think –



As I think about hungers and deep hungers that any of us have, here are a few things I came up with. A hunger for the life from before or new life after COVID where we're not afraid and isolated. All. The. Time. Some might have a hunger for a sense of purpose, not just getting by and filling the time. Or a hunger for a healthy body, that doesn't hurt, or weaken or let you down. A hunger for a person or community that is caring and trustworthy. Hunger for a

better, more life giving, more just world. Or maybe the hunger is just to be enough. Feeling like I can do this next hard thing without crumbling.

So much to be hungry for. And today we ask, Jesus, can you supply our needs? Can you really be the bread of life? And can we ever be filled?

I hear those questions in the complaining the crowd's doing in the gospel today. "Jesus, How can you say all this stuff? How can you do any of it? We know your mama. We saw you grow up. You're no magic wizard who creates this perfect world where everyone has what they need. Who do you think you are?"



And they've got a point. We're not living in a perfect world either. Too often we want Jesus to give us our deepest desires right now. Have you ever prayed those prayers? "God! Help! Now! – Where are you God? Don't you care? I'm so tired, so frustrated."

The crowds want to be filled right now, and probably with the 5000 loaves they had the day before. But they're not understanding what Jesus is saying. To be fed and filled

with the bread of life – to have Jesus touch our greatest hunger - is not something that comes quickly, out of the blue, like a genie has whipped it up out of thin air and hands it to us on a silver platter.



God is faithful. God provides. But always that provision comes over time. It comes as God works slowly in and among us. It comes as we learn to trust in God's good care. Let me say that again. We see God's faithfulness and provision as we learn to trust in God's good care. It takes a certain amount of humility to receive what God gives instead of what I want. It takes attentiveness to see what God is up to.

Because God most often provides in the midst of community and through our hands.

Let me give you an example. On Friday, we gathered here for the funeral of Rachel Husom. Rachel was a dear child of God, long faithful in this community and we came together to commend her to God's care. After the service, we gathered (right here) on the south lawn for memories and stories and some lemonade.

As I looked around the group gathered, it struck me what a feast was there before me. Over there were some people who had provided rides and groceries and check in calls faithfully for all of Covid. There were some who provide resources and companionship to those who are homebound or ill. Working among us were people providing food and set up and clean up so this gathering could take place. Back there were people who had planned and created worship in all its details so we could remember God's promises. Someone said, "I'll go get a sandwich for Rachel's sister and another said, "I'll come to the graveside so she won't be alone." This whole group was there to remind each other that God is among us, helping us share life in ways we never imagined.

Jesus said, "*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*" I pray that we can each learn to trust over time that this bread is enough. That the fullness of God's presence will come again and again – like manna in the wilderness, or a beautiful evening with family and friends, or like a community gathered in the promise of eternal life. This week, watch – and trust – that God will give us life.

Amen.