

Proper 14B – John 6: 35-51 – August 8, 2021 – Immanuel, GM

Romans 8 and Jesus redeeming creation.

OT – Elijah killed false prophets, wanted to die, God gave him food.

EP – Put off old, put on new, imitate Christ.

Bread is not about giving life. Bread is about sustaining life.

They liked Jesus like Americans liked Oprah.

Raise you up on the last day. While waiting, you can read.

OT Wilderness – That food has a shelf life. Most food does. This food does not. They thought Moses gave them the food. No, it was God, the one who always gives you food. They thought the manna was great shakes. They thought the fish and bread were the tops.

Forget the manna, the fishes and loaves, He Himself is the source of true life, and the maintenance of that true life.

Difference between Existing and living.

Sustainable planet. Sustainable Church.

The meaning of “daily bread” = sustenance. You can’t live without it.
The essentials for life – Food, Air, Water, Light. All there in Jesus.

Water of life
Light of the world
Bread of life
Spirit = air

Gives it to all mankind, but that’s not what they’re thinking about here. My daily bread. Catechism – food and drink. Clothing and shoes. House and Home. Land and Animals. Money and Goods. Spouse and Children. Faithful Rulers and Good Government. God weather. Peace. Health. Self-control. Good Reputation. Good Friends. Faithful Neighbors. And the Like.

NB: No luxury items.

NBB: If you had them all, you would be happy.

Daily Bread = Daily Jesus. “Do not be anxious for tomorrow.”

Life is complicated. Eggs. Oreos. What kind of Oreos. Religion.

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. That's a horse. People, you can't just lead them to water.

Weekly bread. People see church differently; as a la carte. I'll take one Baptism, maybe a Confirmation, for sure a wedding – maybe two – it's a nice venue; country church, and since I've been a member here all my life, of course I'll want to be buried from there. I'm a Lutheran!

You can live life happy, or you can do it the hard way.
Decision to eat good food, go to gym, life is good.
Or you can eat – well, a lot of times you feel like what you eat.
Then there's the danger of losing life – man dying from cancer.

Having faith, and nurturing faith. Man dying from cancer.

Who has a child, then doesn't nurture the child. The child grows up – they're all over the place, nothing new there.

Sometimes you just want somebody to be there. Prayer. Sacrament.
Sacrament – packs it all into wafer – I'm here.

Proper 14B – John 6: 35-51 – August 12, 2018 – Immanuel, GM

Food is a lot more complicated than it used to be. Back in the day, Adam and Eve were placed into the Garden and given their run of the place, they could eat whatever – except for that one tree. Garden was to sustain them forever – except that they ate the fruit of that one tree. Then came thorns and thistles and sweat, then expulsion from the Garden.

Cain's offering to God was from "the fruit of the ground" = the ground produced fruit, Cain worked the ground, and Abel took care of his sheep. Social Biologists talk about how man went from that – hunter/gatherer – to tilling the land, but in (4:8) we find them both out in a "field," and God talks about how man will "till" the soil as a matter of fact.

You can hunt and eat what you kill, and you can eat fruit and a few vegetables in season, but it didn't take long before people figured out that it was easier to domesticate animals and plant seeds in the ground and grow crops. The first and second born of the first people seemed to have figured it out, and it was all very un-complicated.

With little variation, that was how food was gotten for most people for most of human history. For those who had land. If you're going to have livestock, and if you're going to plant fruit trees, a garden, and crops, then you need land. It's why hungry Americans are not a common thing, and it's hard to be hungry in this country.

It can be done, but hard. For a lot of people to own land is a very American thing. Our European ancestors, a few people owned the land. In England today, - 1% of people own 90% of land. That after 100 years of laws meant to wrest it from them. The big draw of America has always been land, and there is a lot of it, owned by a lot of people. Rare.

People who could never hope to own any land over there came over here and took it, and bought it, and worked it 40 acres at a time. In colonial times, 90% Americans “farmers.” Iowa was bought in 1850s “land boom,” and mostly west of Iowa land was given out 160 acres at a time in several “homestead acts” – the biggest 1862.

Not to be critical, but for a point of comparison, the Spanish mostly settled most of South America, and South America was settled using the traditional European model – a small number of people got ahold of the land, and the rest of the people worked for them. We saw this in Italy. In Tuscany, castle on hill, apartments in the village, in the country.

That gulf between the haves and the have-nots is still there in Central and South America, rich land, often hungry; here, everybody owns some land, if you don’t, then want/will. It may be a few acres or a lot in town, but it’s your land, and you can do what you will with it; you can even plant fruit trees and a garden, maybe some animals, never go hungry.

About 100 years ago, that all began to change, and we don’t just grow wheat and mill it into flour, feed corn the hogs and butcher in the fall, plant a garden and can it. The Great A & P was the first national chain grocery store, and 100 years ago you could fit about three A & P grocery stores in this room. And then Supercenter – 140, 000 items.

Barnes probably has 10,000 items, maybe 15,000, and food is a lot more complicated than it used to be. Take eggs, for one example. In book *Grocery, the Buying and Selling of Food in America*, Michael Ruhlman talks about how egg shopping used to be small, medium, or large. Now – organic, cage free, free range, brown, local – spaghetti sauce.

Take eggs, for one example. It’s one of the reasons I put less and less stock into what “they” say, especially if “they” are a study somebody paid for – and nobody does a study unless somebody paying them. Grocer Jeff Cleveland “Eggs were considered horrible... they were in a death spiral...” remember? Coffee – is also now good for me.

Food. There are a lot of choices out there. We learn to filter, discern, make right choice. Not all food is the same. Some food is more healthy than other food, and some food is really not food. Some food is more tasty than other food, and some things are clearly not meant to be eaten. Food is a lot more complicated than it used to be. Lots of choices.

How’s your appetite today? Are you eating? There’s a reason why the doctor asks you that; about your appetite. If you don’t have one, that’s a bad thing. No appetite is likely

one of the first signs of illness. Think about the last time you didn't have an appetite? Me, I'm really regular about eating, and if I miss a meal, it probably means I'm sick.

Hunger is a good thing. It means you're still alive. It means you're still healthy. The hungry people who follow Jesus are healthy, as well as likely unemployed, as well as likely landless – Roman citizens could claim their “daily bread” from the Government, as well as circuses. Most of these people can't, and they're hungry, and that's a good thing.

As long as you have food. Hunger means you're still healthy & kicking. It's when you're hungry and don't have food that it gets problematic. 3 weeks ago, they interrupted the vacation of Jesus. Why? They wanted to hear Him teach. Then they got hungry – it's going to happen – and He fed them; 50,000, and now it's a whole new ball game.

Their interest quickly changed from what the man was saying about God to – this man can feed us. Try to talk to a hungry man about God. It was my problem growing up; you want me to sit here and listen to that man talk about God. I'm hungry, when's this thing going to be over with, and are we going to Town & Country or Bishops, and will be line?

The only thing the hungry man wants to know is do you have food for me, and they wanted to make Him a “Bread King.” The Emperor was the “Bread King” for Roman Citizen, one to give to them their “daily bread,” but these people were not citizens, they had no “Bread King,” and they got hungry – all the time.

Last week, we saw that they had come full circle. Their pursuit of Him had begun as a pursuit of the preaching of the Word of God, and it had turned into a pursuit of Him as the man who could be their “Bread King” and give them their “daily bread,” because they got hungry every single day of their lives, a gnawing, all consuming longing for food.

He re-directs their attention from that **“food that decays”** to the food **“which endures into eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you”** as a gift, and no, you don't owe me anything for this eternal life, it's gift, no strings attached. They asked Him about the bread in the wilderness, He talks to them about bread that comes down from heaven.

They said to Him **“Lord, give us this bread always,”** He says, **“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will not hunger, and He who believes in me will never thirst,”** and what an outlandish thing to say. When and where in this world can there ever be a time and place of no hunger, a place of no thirst. We hunger and thirst all the time!

It means that your hunger will be satisfied, and your thirst quenched, and I think His feeding of the 50,000 is the beginning of “Christian Charity.” If you recall how that went down, Apostles used Imperative to command Jesus to send them into town for food, but Jesus used Imperative to command them **“you give them something to eat,”** so it begins.

The Roman Government was not feeding the masses out of the goodness of their heart. They were providing the masses with “bread and circuses” to “appease” them, to keep them from getting hungry – hungry people are often angry, and will often act on their hunger-fueled anger. Guy in Venezuela used a drone last week to act on his hunger.

One of the reasons it’s hard to be hungry in this country – it can be done – is that the Christians won’t let you starve. The guy – about your age – pulled up in beater pickup truck, rang the doorbell, said he’s hungry, ya, hungry, what do you do? Go get that man some food. Check cupboard, refrigerator, freezer, get the man some food – here’s a \$20.

Then there was guy Pittsburg, Pastor offered to buy him a Value Meal at the McDonalds across the street, the guy who said he was kind of tired of Value Meals, could I take him to restaurant downtown – no. No, I can’t. Food pantries all over place. Even Europeans know about feeding hungry people – they have forgotten why – they continue be salt.

But some were put off by the claim of Jesus to be the **“Bread of Life,”** which is a loftier position than mere “Bread King.” There were lot “Bread Kings,” but only one **“Bread of Life.”** The off put **“murmured,” “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?”** What does He mean, that He came down from heaven?

What does He mean? There’s that “teachable moment,” when the ears of the murmurers perk up as they ask Him what He means, now we’re back full circle again, you listening to me as I teach you about God. What does He mean by calling Himself the Bread of Life, the Bread that comes down from heaven?

It means, He says, that you are lost to hell for eternity without Him. It means that He is the exclusive way to heaven, and there is no alternative route. It means that when He talks, they are listening to no less than God Himself, who is standing there in the flesh teaching them about Him. All this has been written down; you can read it yourself.

It means that there is a difference between just existing and living. Adam and Eve were made not to just be Adam and Eve, to exist – boring, but to live; to enjoy the entirety of creation, which had been created for their use and enjoyment. That, and that’s Who God is; He is a creative God, and He creates things, and He passed that down to us.

To be critical, and to compare and contrast – continue to watch the very good DVD every other Wednesday – and it’s from PBS. Narrator Jonathan Phillips was comparing and contrasting the “Christian God” with the pagan gods. The pagan gods were anything but loving and caring; they took great delight in toying with humans.

Without the Bread of Life, you just try to get along, no hope or even thought of a thing like heaven or afterlife of any kind – original “when you’re dead, you’re dead...” To not just exist, but to live is to know that when you’re dead, you’re not dead. Here Jesus says specifically that those who eat of Him will be raised up on the last day. That’s living!

That's a big one. To know for a certainty where you will spend eternity, and to know that it will be in the good place, not the bad one. Knowing that sort of frees you up to spend life doing something other than spend every waking hour trying to work your way into heaven, to discern some purpose in life, or to convince yourself that when you're dead...

That's a big one. Besides that, Holy Spirit was planted deep into your body at Baptism, and you know right from wrong, and you want to do right and not do wrong. We don't always succeed, we often fail miserably, but more often than most. The 10 were given by God to Israel so that they would know how to live life and not just exist.

The Fourth Commandment specifically tells children to obey your parents "so that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth," and I can see that. I can also see that with the rest of them. The man married to same woman for 40 years; that's living. Divorce = ripping apart of two who have become "one flesh" – not a good thing.

If you murder somebody, you can repent, but you might end up in prison, and I've heard things. Back in the 80s, the Vicar from Kalispell toured the new Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge, mentioned that it looked like nice place, tour guard reminded The Vicar that "nobody is here because they want to be." Silly Vicar.

In case you hadn't connected dots, Jesus tells us not to "hate," same as murder = it's the first step – hatred = I wish that person was gone – opportunity. Best to nip that in bud, gets out of hand, one thing that can consume you. I see people consumed by hatred, and it ends up being a miserable existence, it's not living, not healthy. And the like.

Understanding that no matter what circumstance here, a loving God has the very hairs on my head numbered, He knows what you need, and will help you in your time of need. To know a simple thing like fall into sin; Why wars & hunger & poverty & evil, How can there be a God. To know it's not God's fault, no more than when your children act up.

To know that when we stumble, or fail miserably – happens – our sins are forgiven.

Are you eating the right things? Tell me what you had for breakfast. There are a lot of choices out there. We learn to filter, discern, make right choice. Not all food is the same. Some food is more healthy than other food, and some food is really not food. Some food is more tasty than other food, and some things are clearly not meant to be eaten.

When it comes to religion, things are a lot more complicated than they used to be. One Christian Church, and heresies came, and heresies went, only to re-appear later with a different name, but one Christian Church. Then Reformation, and every time somebody has a new idea – new Protestant church, and some of Lutherans off the rails.

Checked the dish, now up to 12 religion stations, including the Jewish and Mormon stations, and for ½ hour on Sunday morning, LCMS programming on one of them. We sort of took the lead in radio with KFUE, and there's a lot out there. Dobson is good, and he doesn't talk much theology, and there's a lot of crazy stuff out there.

There's a lot out there, can be complicated.

Here, probably going to be okay, out there, not so much.

When you go out there, remember, and do not forget that not all food is the same.

When Rome says that the Internet is both the best thing and the worst thing every; it's like that for religion. Church fathers for free – most of them are on my phone, and my car reads them to me, Book Concord free. Every Tuesday morning go to biblehubblehub.com. Things that would have meant a trip to Augustana or Ambrose Library – or Berlin, click.

Here today is a good thing. You're still alive.

I'm conflicted. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in me and I'm a different person, and because I'm you pastor, I care about you. I care about your health, but I'm not your doctor, but I care about your health, and I may talk to you about that, but I'm not your doctor, so I probably won't. But I'm conflicted.

I'm not your doctor, but I am my doctor. I have a medical team that assists me. My M.D. is a wonderful doctor, and he's #3 on my team. My #2 is a sciency person who

reads a lot and understands things I don't. And I'm the lead on my medical team. But I'm not your doctor. But I am your pastor, and I'm here to tell you;

My team. Read Internet.

Nobody has to tell me to eat.

Drink as well as eat bread – they go together.

CONCL – Religion is a lot more complicated than it used to be. Lot of choices out there.

Some choices are more healthy than others.

We learn to filter things.

Nobody has to tell me to eat.

Like that with spiritual food, a lot more complicated than it used to be. Lots of choices out there. Christian radio – have to filter it. Christian TV. History Channel. It's an American thing, a modern thing; don't tell me what to do, don't tell me what to believe.

Exodus comes up again. OT – Elijah was on the lam. Full bread. Feeding of 50,000. Both were physical feeding. Jesus is talking about spiritual feeding. Like every other time He uses metaphor, like any of us using metaphor, Jesus here does not willy-nilly roll the metaphor dice, but He uses metaphor with a purpose. Bread.

Feeding babies has become much less complicated than it used to be. Bread is not for babies. Bread is what you eat after you are no longer a baby. Jesus does not call Himself “the milk of life.” Jesus calls Himself the “Bread of Life” = big people food. Hebrews “the milk...the meat.” Christians who stay babies = know I'm a Lutheran, that's about all I know. Seed and soil. Truth and Falsehood. Counterfeit – teller once told me.

Proper 14B – John 6: 35-51 – August 9, 2015 – Immanuel, GM – Bennett Geffers

Just got back from Montana – “The Way” – Baptized into something.

When we last left Jesus, He was talking about hunger, miracles, and Himself, directing hungry people to Himself, where they will find food for the soul, saying **“I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst”** and we don't. And we don't spend our time and energy in this and that spiritual and religious rat race that is the spiritual life of many Americans.

It's easy to get distracted, focus on earthly, temporal bread, which He gives to us.

So it is that Jesus keeps directing out focus to heavenly, eternal bread, which He gives to us, and which is, of the two – earthly and temporal – the most important – eternal.

“But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.” How can that be? How can they see what they saw – they had all seen themselves – for example – fed from two Tilapia and five loaves – and still they do not believe. How can that be? David Hume, 18th Century Scotsman who was an atheist, but secretly, because such a thing was frowned upon in 18th Century Scotland, invented “Experiential Philosophy.”

Experiential Philosophy teaches; all knowledge comes from experience, we experience things with the senses; mostly our eyes. Things we can see are true, and if we haven’t seen it, we don’t know it to be true. David Hume said that unless he saw with His own eyes Jesus walk on water, he would not believe it. If he saw a man walk on water, he said, then he would believe it. Oh, no you wouldn’t.

David Hume did not believe that Jesus walked on water because he did not believe in God, and it had nothing to do with seeing such a thing or not seeing a thing. No more than these people, who had been part of the Feeding of the 5,000 – and they still don’t know how did Jesus get over to the other side without a boat – to whom J says, **“you have seen me and yet you do not believe.”**

And what’s more, they are utterly unable to believe except the Father cause them to believe. He had already been over this with Nicodemus, speaking of conversion to the Christian religion as being “born from above.” Of all the metaphors He could have used for conversion, Jesus chooses to use the birth metaphor.

Being born is something that happens to you, of which you are the passive recipient. So also conversion to Christianity. That idea that God is the giver and we are the receivers of eternal life is all over the place in this sermon of Jesus, beginning with **“All that the father gives me will come to me, and him who comes to me I will not cast out.”**

He does not say to these people that they should decide to follow Him, but speaks of **“all the father gives”** Him **“for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me; and this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”**

“I shall lose no thing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”

Sometimes you be reading and a word sticks out, and it looks like that’s the wrong word, but it’s the Bible, so that must be the right word. Mentioned that when a person writes a book, it is that person’s creation, and the author can revise and change thing, but other people can’t.

An author told me this week that she writes a book, and then after about a week of final revising, she's ready to put her book on Amazon. Another guy wrote the book in a few weeks, and about six months ready, it was ready to be published. Others just never stop revising, and these days, you can do that.

Unlike that, when God used men to write Bible, it was spot-on the first time. There were no proof copies, no editors' marks, no revisions, no second or third editions, nothing at all that needed to be changed.

So that word "no thing" caught my eye, as in Jesus statement **"I shall lose no thing,"** and it's the Bible, so that's the word. Doesn't He mean that He won't lose any person?

Except that the word is "thing," not person; **"I shall lose no thing."**

He's talking about Creation, and we talked about Creation last week, and what an incredible job God did on this creation...and then the fall into sin. And with the fall into sin came hunger, and other things that are not good things. To remind her of Eve's sin, women have pain in childbirth, and to remind Adam of his sin, weeds were added to the mix and it's hard work to make a living.

I have not checked lately, but I know that the temperature in Hilo, Hi, averages highs of 80 – 85 year round, little warmer in the summer, little cooler in the winter, always nice, always pleasant, a tropical paradise. That's what the earth was like before the flood. Around here we have seasons, which come into being after the flood. And after the flood, storms that kill, deserts and polar regions, and decay that reaches all things, even man. That after the flood, shortly after the fall into sin.

In Romans (8:19 – 20), the Apostle talks about the entirety of creation waiting for the last day, when it will be freed from its "ματαιότητι – aimlessness" and is there any better way to describe society without Christ "aimless."

He goes on to say that creation will be released from **"bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God (RSV)"** and that's what He's talking about here, a **"new heaven and new earth"** new and improved.

And the Son talks about the "will of the Father." And exactly what is the Will of the Father? **"This is the will of my Father; that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life; and I will raise Him up on the last day."**

The will of the Father is that these people who believe in the Son will have eternal life. So the Father has chosen you, He has handed you for safekeeping to the Son, and when your time on this earth is done, you will have eternal life – resurrection on the last day.

And He hears sounds. Hushed voices in the back of the room, whispering, agitated, and He can hear them, and He can make out them saying “is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph?” They know Joseph, and they know Joseph’s parents, and none of them are anything special. “So how is it – they say among themselves – that this Jesus says “I have come down from heaven,” what does that even mean that He’s ‘bread fr heaven?’”

Sometimes Jesus is very subtle in His approach to such things. This time Jesus is very blunt in his approach, **“stop grumbling,”** he says to the grumblers, **“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise Him up at the last day.”** Speaking again of conversion, He talks abt the Father “drawing” or “persuading” people that Christianity is the way to go.

The Book of Acts is filled with talk of various Apostles **“arguing”** and **“using logic”** and **“persuading”** people to believe in Jesus. One time, a man named Festus – no not Festus Haggen – Festus Portius, Roman Governor of Judea 58 to 62, wanted to talk to Paul. Festus called Paul a crazy person, and Paul talks to Festus about Jesus and the OT, and after a while Festus goes all Patsy Cline and says that he’s almost persuaded to become a Christian, and he thought that would be a bad thing – get out of here, Paul.

In his *confessions*, Augustine talks about how he fought for the longest time against becoming a Christian. His motive was base; that he wanted to be party boy and then be baptized on his death bed. I knew a kid in high school who thought the same thing; Jeff he never got a death bed. He missed the curve and ran into a telephone pole and was killed instantly. Augustine did not, and became the greatest of the Church Fathers.

He wrote, for Christianity, against the pagans, Christian apologetics is nothing new, and Christians spend much ink and pixels and bandwidth and sometimes even talk in person to other people, the mouthpieces of God seeking to “persuade” people that the Christian religion is the way to go.

Sometimes I think people are waiting for a lightning bolt to hit. I know that people sometimes think that because people have told me that. Conversion to the Christian religion is an act of God, but the person converted is not unconscious, but is in fact very much aware of what is going on, and often needs to be persuaded that Christianity is true.

Unless you are a Pentecostal, in which case you do check your brain at the door.

, and the brain is very much engaged, and we are persuaded that Christianity is true, the beginning of a life spent thinking. Clifford Williams *The Life of the Mind*

And then Jesus quotes from the OT, Isaiah 54:13 (Jeremiah 31:34) **“It 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.’”** Or to put it another way, if you want to learn about God, the best teacher will be God.

If you want to know about me and about what I think, it would probably be best to ask me about me. If I want to know about you and about what you think, it would probably be best to ask you about you. In fact, there are few things in life that are more annoying than the sentence that begins with “you think...” especially when the person who says that you is wrong about what you think.

Those guys must still be in the room, the guys who were murmuring “because He said, ‘I am the bread which came down from heaven.’” Those guys must still be in the room because He says it again **“I am the bread of life,”** and then He doubles down, right back to the manna, **“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven; that a man may eat of it and not die.”**

Not Baptized into nothing. Baptized into something. We saw with our own eyes. Baptized into Christ, Who is the way, the truth, and the life. Amen

People talking about “my faith”

Fourth Petition and First Article.

Relationship between the physical and the spiritual.

They also were there for the feeding, and they must have known that there was no food with which to feed a few, let alone as many as were there. They saw Jesus take the two

Tilapia and five loaves and do what He did with them, and they saw the twelve basketfuls of left-overs that were left over. They saw all of that, and what did they take away from it? When we get hungry, we can look this guy up, and He will feed us.

He saves you – objective Justification
He calls you – subjective Justification
“persuade”

“I am the bread of life.”

When He had talked to Well Woman, He had said something similar “I have water to drink, if you drink it you will never thirst.” Metaphorically.

Trust and Believing – on bicycle.

Restoration of fallen creation.

Type Anti-type

Creation – the Fall. Sweat. Pain. Decay. Seasons. Storms. Earth’s tilt.

There are a lot of different beliefs about conversion to Christianity. Those different beliefs can be summarized and categorized in three ways.

The first way to believe about conversion to Christianity is called Double Predestination. Double Predestination was invented by John Calvin, a contemporary of Luther, and it teaches that God chooses certain people to go to heaven, and that God chooses certain people to go to hell, and it’s a done deal, no changing anything. Not many people believe that anymore in this country, but a lot of people believe reaction against Calvinism.

Synergism is what we call the second way to believe about conversion to Christianity. Synergism was invented by a Dutch Theologian named Jacob Arminius just a few years after Calvin invented his new doctrine. Arminius taught that man, not God, decides who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. In this way of thinking, it’s all up to you, and that plays well with Americans,

Proper 14B – John 6: 35-51 – August 12, 2012 – Immanuel, Charlotte

So there I was in my office, Zion Lutheran Church, Pittsburg, KS – we spent most of the 90s in Pittsburg, KS, SE corner of the state. Our children were mostly raised there, they like Jayhawk basketball, and if you ask them where they are “from,” they will probably say Kansas. We had a good run there – when I got the call to Zion Lutheran in Pittsburg, KS, I did what you do; drove down – we were north of KC, it was a couple of hours, and met with the church leadership.

We talked about the stuff you're supposed to talk about; the town, the history of the congregation, what they needed, and then Norman Grotheer cut to the chase – Norman was pretty good at cutting to the chase – when Norman Grotheer said “Pastor, we're just looking for a shepherd for our little flock,” I knew that what they wanted was what I had to give, and mostly because of that, I took the call to Zion Lutheran Church, Pittsburg, KS, where we spent the 90s.

So I was in my office, “officing,” and a guy walks in – I had an “open door” policy – and I had never seen this guy before, and the guy says to me, “I'm hungry, been on the road, and I just need something to eat.” It was not the first time that a guy had said words like that, and it would not be the last, and I said, “I can buy you a value meal.” Oh, and did I mention that my office was in a perfect location; Taco Bell across the road, KFC, Pizza Hut, and McDonalds within a block, mini-mart right next door. “I really don't want a value meal,” said the guy who was asking for a handout. “I'm kind of tired of fast food. I want a real meal, from a real restaurant,” and I didn't really know what to say.

Jesus has just performed that well-known miracle, the “Feeding of the 5,000.” We have talked about that miracle, how the number was actually 5,000 + women and children, making the miracle even more astounding – but if you can feed 5,000 men, then why not their “women and children” also, about as many people as can fit into Wrigley Stadium or the city of Bettendorf. And the people liked it. They liked it that when they were hungry, Jesus fed them so that they had their fill.

And after He had fed the 5,000 “+ women and children,” He went into the mountains, and they went to the sea, got into a boat, and began to cross the Sea of Galilee. A storm came up, and they were frightened, and Jesus came to them walking on the Sea.

It was a beautiful day yesterday, and we went over and picked up granddaughter Ava and took a bike ride along the river, and made a round with the Channel Cat. Over between Bettendorf and Moline, we saw two men – I named them Jesus and Peter – who were standing in the middle of the Mississippi River. It was weird. My guess is that they were standing on a sand bar in the middle of the river, but Jesus had no sand bar, He was really simply walking on water, another miracle and he said to the scared cowards in the boat “it is I; stop being afraid” and it was, and they did.

And they survived the storm, and they made it to the other side, and people followed Him across the Sea, and Jesus notes that they followed Him because they were hungry. And He says to them – last week – **“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, for on Him has God the Father set His seal.”** That's pretty straightforward, isn't it? It sounds a lot like **“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,”** and **“seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you.”**

Don't be distracted by this life, but about the next life, and they asked Him what they should do to be doing **"the work of God."** It's a reasonable question, one frequently asked by the Natural Man who wants to get to heaven; **"ya, I want that, what do I have to do to get that?"** I want to do the works of God, I want to get to heaven, just tell me what I have to do, and I'll do it. They sound like the Lawyer in Luke 10, who asks Jesus **"teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"**

Jesus tells him to love God and love your neighbor, and the man says **"who is my neighbor?"** and Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and in that parable, Jesus turns the focus from the Lawyer and his own good works for salvation to Himself and His work of salvation, how He takes the poor, beaten, bloodied sinner and mercifully grants to him life.

Like that, Jesus here turns the focus from the people who are saying "what should we do," to Himself, telling them what He is about to do. **"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."** It's not about your works for God. It's about what God has worked in you – faith, **"a gift of God, lest any man should boast."** But that, it seems, wasn't good enough. I get that; Christians today wonder what more they can do, and sometimes they can do more, and sometimes just thank God for His gifts.

And they ask of the man whom they have observed doing many miracles, "do a miracle. Do a miracle, Mr. Miracle Man, and then we will believe, as you say. Like the time that our ancestors were wandering in the wilderness for forth years, & God gave them manna, like that, and then we will believe. Jesus reminds them that it was God, His Father, and not Moses, who gave them bread, and then comes back to His original point, clarifying, **"my Father 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."**

That sound good to them, and they say **"Lord, give us this bread always,"** and then the bombshell **"I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."** Imagine that, a bread that keeps on giving, a drink that refreshes infinitely. The last thing I ate was chips and French Onion dip. I'm hungry. I'm not thirsty, but I have often been thirsty, like on the bike ride yesterday.

We'll swing by DeWitt and I'll get Chester Chicken, and I won't be hungry anymore, but after awhile I'll be hungry again. The word and promise of Jesus **"He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst"** likely meant a lot more to the people of Jesus' time, who had not Chester Chicken, not grocery stores, nor fast food, who were often hungry, often thirsty. **"Lord, give us this bread always."**

"I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst," and He goes on to explain that He, the Son, has been sent by the Father, to do the will of that Father, and what is the will of the Father? **"That I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up at the last."**

What is the will of the Father? You. You are the will of the Father, and specifically, it is the will of God your heavenly Father that when you die and are planted in the ground, you do not stay dead and planted in the ground, but are raised up into eternal life. That is the will of your Heavenly Father **“that every one who sees the son and believes in Him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day.”**

It was a beautiful day yesterday, and we went over and picked up granddaughter Ava and took a bike ride along the river. We really got into bike riding in my first congregation, Zion Lutheran in Burnett, WI. Many Sundays in the summer, we would load up the bikes and camping gear right after church and head out for an evening and Monday of camping and biking. We were not poor, but we were not rich, and we really couldn't afford one of them fancy bike trailers for the kids, so I made one out of wood and angle iron.

These days, we're not exactly rich, but neither are we poor, and rather than build a trailer out of wood and angle iron, I went to Dunhams and got a real store-bought trailer to pull behind my bike; all granddaughter Ava has to do is enjoy the ride. We tried out trailer a couple of weeks ago at the house, and she asked “what happens if you fall?” and I said, “If I fall, you fall, but I don't fall.” It was a concept difficult for the six-year old to grasp.

So yesterday I told her flat-out that it's a trust thing; you have to trust that I'm not going to fall, because I never fall, and she looked me in the eye, and jumped on, and we had a nice ride – with a ride on the Channel Cat thrown in to boot. Ya, it was a trust thing, and as soon as the six-year-old decided that grandpa wasn't going to fall, it was a good ride – by the end she was going, “wee wee, faster, faster.”

It's like that with us and God, isn't it? He wants us to trust in Him for eternal life – a pretty large issue – and we are hesitant, perhaps not able to comprehend how this one who is so much like us is able to avoid falling, when we so often do just that. And yet He bids us do just that; trust in Him, not self, trust in His perfect work, not our imperfect and sporadic works, for eternal life. In fact, trust is the only “work” that amounts to a hill of beans, and that He gives to us freely in the waters of Baptism.

And now come those pesky Jews, religious kinsmen of Jesus, who had mixed emotions about Him, **“they murmured.”** We would say, “they had concerns.” They had concerns that this “bread of life” did not come down from heaven, as He alleges, but that He is Joseph and Mary's kid. Jesus tries to assure them, speaking again of the Resurrection on the last day, saying **“truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and *not* die. I**

am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will *live forever*; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh”

You want a miracle? How about this? How about I give you my flesh and my blood? How about if that flesh is put to death, that blood flows out onto the ground, to save you from your sins and to give to you eternal life? How about that? And how about I take these earthly, perishable elements of bread and wine, and by My Word attached to that bread and that wine cause them to be my very body and blood, **“given and shed for you for the remission of sin.”** You want a miracle. How about that? Good enough?

“I’m kind of tired of the Sacrament. Didn’t we just do that two weeks ago? It takes so much time. The bread tastes so bland, and can’t we maybe get some Cabernet Sauvignon instead of that stuff that we’ve been using.”

Indeed, God led Israel out of slavery in Egypt, across the Red Sea, stop at Sinai and pick up the Ten Commandments, then on to the Promised Land, about to enter – but there were large people there and they were scared, and they mistrusted God, and God made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, surrounded on every side by evil and danger. But during those forty years He sent them manna every day, and then one day delivered them to that Promised Land – establishing Himself in Jerusalem, in Temple, on ark of Covenant, where wings of Seraphim...

Indeed, God has led us out of our slavery to sin, across the waters of Baptism, where the perfect obedience of Jesus in that water sanctified by Him at His Baptism washes away those sins, we are bound for the promised land. But because of our fear and mistrust, first observed in Adam, we wander in this wilderness of this earthly life, surrounded on every side by evil and danger. But He sent Jesus, and He sends Jesus, who comes to us in Word and Sacrament – beginning this afternoon the word preached and the Sacrament administered by your new Pastor – to sustain us during the journey.

And the journey will one day end, when will come to pass the words and promise of Jesus **“the bread of life”** to His Own, **“I will raise him (you) up on the last day.”**

And I don’t know about you, but that’s good enough for me. Amen