

Dear Friends,

I apologize for last week's bulletin that had no message. I sent the wrong bulletin to Lisa to mail to you, So I will begin this notice with last weeks message (sermon). Thanks for your understanding. Pastor Rosemary

**AUGUST 11 MESSAGE BASED ON John 6:35, 41-51
"Level Two in Believing"**

As a reminder for us all, I'd like to read the very beginning of the Gospel of John. John 1:1-5 It is entitled "**Story of the Word**"

1 In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.

² The Word was with God in the beginning.

³ Everything came into being through the Word,
and without the Word
nothing came into being.

What came into being

⁴ through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

This passage will help explain some of John:6.

The Gospel for today comes as an offer of a gift, an offer of bread from heaven that gives to the recipient life eternal.

We began this theme two Sundays ago. Without repeating the details that we already discussed, it is enough to recall here that we have referred to the feeding of the multitude as level one of the narrative and how the people understood what Jesus was saying.

On this level the crowd lives, thinks, and acts. Even its talk of God, its immediate embrace of Jesus, its talk of signs and faith is willful, calculating, and self-serving. Even when the arena of action and conversation is religion instead of money or physical indulgence, we should not be blind to the fact that the motivational currents here all move toward self-interest.

Notice that **no one** in the crowd is talking commitment or discipleship; **the entire focus is upon what God through Jesus can do for us.**

When the author of the Gospel of John talks of "the world," **nowhere** does he deal with the usual popular images of getting rid of sin. On the contrary, he uses the "world" to describe religious practices, places, rituals, traditions, and creeds that are perverted to **self-interest.**

To Jesus' listeners in John 6, bread was bread, not a sign of anything more or better. The next meal, not new life, was on their minds. Even so, Jesus still speaks and tries to instill in them the idea that he is the true bread from heaven.

Jesus points his listeners **beyond** the meal of the evening before, **beyond** even the manna in the wilderness that their ancestors had eaten, **beyond** all

that to the true bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world, Jesus.

So, the listeners seem to have an appetite for this true bread that gives life **UNTIL**, Jesus identifies himself as this Bread. At this, they murmur, able to think of Jesus as being from Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary, but **certainly not from heaven**. *(These comments are the same ones we heard weeks ago when Jesus visited his home in Nazareth "Who does he think he is?")*

Here is the question. **In what sense does the author of this Gospel want us to understand Jesus as the true bread from Heaven?**

At level one bread was bread; at level two the bread is the word of God; the **words** Jesus is telling the people in today's passage.

In verse 45 Jesus quotes from Isaiah 54:13 ⁴⁵ "It is written in the Prophets, And they *will all be taught by God*. Everyone who has listened to the Father and learned from him comes to me."

The **word that reveals God is life-giving** can be found in Deuteronomy 8:3. "He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that come from the mouth of the Lord." In other words, this message that Jesus is giving is NOT NEW. It was written in the Old Testament.

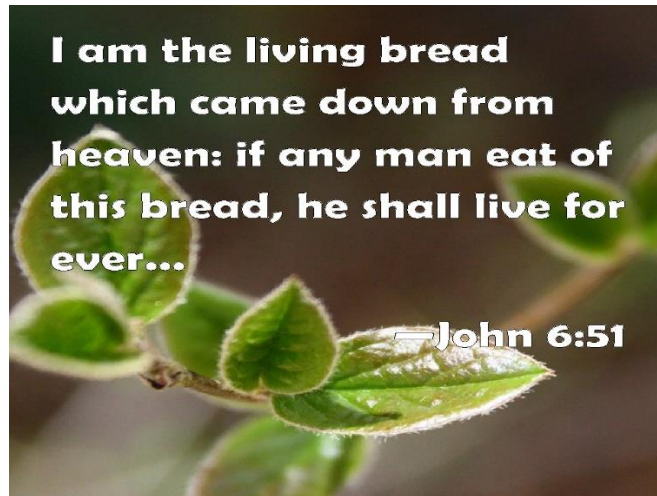
Such an interpretation of Jesus as the life-giving Word from heaven is not only congenial with this Gospel's identification of Jesus as the **Word**, but with **this** Gospel's theological assumption that the fundamental human appetite, the hunger beneath all hungers, is FOR A WORD FROM GOD.

No one has even seen God; how then will we know this God whom to know is life eternal? The only Son from the heart of the Father has revealed God. Jesus not only speaks the word that proceeds from the mouth of God; Jesus is the Word, the Bread which is more than bread, the manna that the people do not know.

There is no famine of the word of God, but at this point in the text the people remain hungry, having refused the Bread. Amen.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2024 10 AM
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY**

AFTER PENTECOST



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*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in bold print

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

PRELUDE: “Be Thou My Vision” Mary Ellen Kerrick

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Our Church’s Wider Mission

***CALL TO WORSHIP: (inspired by Psalm 111)**

One: Praise the Holy One! Give thanks to God in the congregation.

Many: God’s works delight us, inspire us, challenge us, and uphold us.

One: Praise the Holy One! Give thanks to God in the congregation.

Many. Righteousness endures forever. The covenant is everlasting.

One: Praise the Holy One! Give thanks to God in the congregation.

Many: Honoring God leads to wisdom. Let us praise the Holy One forever!

***INVOCATION:**

Holy God, we come together in your presence to offer worship, thanksgiving, and praise. We remember your covenant and acknowledge your abiding presence.

Envelop us in your glory, strengthen us to confront the weariness of the world, challenge us to spread the good news, and empower us to be the church you have created us to be. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 321 “Break Now the Bread of Life”**

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

Holy God, we find wisdom in your word, in your presence, and in your way. Help us to follow the path of love, community, and sharing. Open our awareness to the unmet needs in our community and the ways we may meet them. Open our compassion to notice those who too often go without being acknowledged. Open our schedules to be present to your Spirit, our neighbors, and ourselves. Fill us with wisdom, peace, and hope to move boldly toward new life and the fullness of joy.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, God honors our request for wisdom. Individually and, most importantly, collectively, we have the wisdom, discernment, and understanding necessary to meet the challenges of the day, to live a life pleasing to the Holy One, and to participate in the coming of God's kingdom.

***GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSONS: 1 Kings 2:0-12; 3:3-14
(From the Message)**

2 ¹⁻⁴ When David's time to die approached, he charged his son Solomon, saying, "I'm about to go the way of all the earth, but you—be strong; show what you're made of! Do what God tells you. Walk in the paths he shows you: Follow the life-map absolutely, keep an eye out for the signposts, his course for life set out in the revelation to Moses; then you'll get on well in whatever you do and wherever you go. Then God will confirm what he promised me when he said, 'If your sons watch their step, staying true to me heart and soul, you'll always have a successor on Israel's throne.'

⁵⁻⁶ "And don't forget what Joab son of Zeruiah did to the two commanders of Israel's army, to Abner son of Ner and to Amasa son of Jether. He murdered them in cold blood, acting in peacetime as if he were at war, and has been stained with that blood ever since. Do what you think best with him, but by no means let him get off scot-free—make him pay.

⁷ "But be generous to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite—extend every hospitality to them; that's the way they treated me when I was running for my life from Absalom your brother.

⁸⁻⁹ "You also will have to deal with Shimei son of Gera the Benjaminite from Bahurim, the one who cursed me so viciously when I was on my way to Mahanaim. Later, when he welcomed me back at the Jordan, I promised him under God, 'I won't put you to death.' But neither should you treat him as if nothing ever happened. You're wise, you know how to handle these things.

You'll know what to do to make him pay before he dies."

¹⁰⁻¹² Then David joined his ancestors. He was buried in the City of David. David ruled Israel for forty years—seven years in Hebron and another thirty-three in Jerusalem. Solomon took over on the throne of his father David; he had a firm grip on the kingdom.

³ ¹⁻³ Solomon arranged a marriage contract with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He married Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the City of David until he had completed building his royal palace and God's Temple and the wall around Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the people were worshiping at local shrines because at that time no temple had yet been built to the Name of God. Solomon loved God and continued to live in the God-honoring ways of David his father, except that he also worshiped at the local shrines, offering sacrifices and burning incense.

⁴⁻⁵ The king went to Gibeon, the most prestigious of the local shrines, to worship. He sacrificed a thousand Whole-Burnt-Offerings on that altar. That night, there in Gibeon, God appeared to Solomon in a dream: God said, "What can I give you? Ask."

⁶ Solomon said, "You were extravagantly generous in love with David my father, and he lived faithfully in your presence, his relationships were just and his heart right. And you have persisted in this great and generous love by giving him—and this very day!—a son to sit on his throne.

⁷⁻⁸ "And now here I am: God, my God, you have made me, your servant, ruler of the kingdom in place of David my father. I'm too young for this, a mere child! I don't know the ropes, hardly know the 'ins' and 'outs' of this job. And here I am, set down in the middle of the people you've chosen, a great people—far too many to ever count.

⁹ "Here's what I want: Give me a God-listening heart so I can lead your people well, discerning the difference between good and evil. For who on their own is capable of leading your glorious people?"

¹⁰⁻¹⁴ God, the Master, was delighted with Solomon's response. And God said to him, "Because you have asked for this and haven't grasped after a long life, or riches, or the doom of your enemies, but you have asked for the ability to lead and govern well, I'll give you what you've asked for—I'm giving you a wise and mature heart. There's never been one like you before; and there'll be no one after. As a bonus, I'm giving you both the wealth and glory you didn't ask for—there's not a king anywhere who will come up to your mark. And if you stay on course, keeping your eye on the life-map and the God-signs as your father David did, I'll also give you a long life."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 111 Page 696

**EPISTLE LESSON: Ephesians 5:15-20
Be filled with the Spirit**

¹⁵ So be careful to live your life wisely, not foolishly. ¹⁶ Take advantage of every opportunity because these are evil times. ¹⁷ Because of this, don't be ignorant, but understand the Lord's will. ¹⁸ Don't get drunk on wine, which produces depravity. Instead, be filled with the Spirit in the following ways: ¹⁹ speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts; ²⁰ always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

***GOSPEL LESSON: John 6:51-58**

⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”
⁵² Then the Jews debated among themselves, asking, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”
⁵³ Jesus said to them, “I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Human One and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵ My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in them. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me lives because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. It isn't like the bread your ancestors ate, and then they died. Whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen

MESSAGE: “Level Three in Believing”

I don't know if you have ever noticed, but our biblical ancestors expressed their most profound experiences differently than we do 2000 years later. I think some of the reason for that is the fact that the ancient people did not have scientists or medical knowledge like we do today. They did not have colleges, professors, scientific experimentation, books, periodicals, etc. When the ancient people experienced grief, remorse, repentance, devotion, love, or joy of life for example, today we would tend to associate all these emotions with “the heart”. Whereas the ancient writers' description would be in terms of bone, breath, flesh, marrow, joints, and stomach. Many of us know how totally the human frame is affected by significant experiences, but we don't express it so fully. The psalmist's sin and remorse reverberate through every bone and sinew or muscle, and can be read in Psalm 102. David's lament over Absalom is total; his whole body joins in a chorus of grief (2 Samuel 18-19.)

Hundreds of years later, apparently, some of the Christians addressed in Ephesus were imbibing wine as a way to get the body to join more fully in the joyous expressions of the Spirit-filled life as can be read in Ephesians 5. The assumption is that eating and drinking, flesh and bone, are not to be separated from

the experiences of soul and spirit. In fact, the New Testament knows no more meaningful act for effecting and witnessing to the relationship of Christians with one another and with Christ than eating together. Whoever has removed eating from the list of profoundly religious acts will have great difficulty with our Gospel lesson for today.

In this whole chapter 6 of the Gospel of John, Jesus is calling for us to eat and believe; eat and believe. Do those two words go together?

One time when I visited my oldest daughter who had moved to Chicago she took me out to eat at a restaurant called “Blind Faith.” I thought that was an odd way to name a restaurant. I asked her, “does that mean the chef is blind and we should have faith that the food will be okay? Or does it mean that we are blind folded when we eat and we should guess what we are eating?” So what does Jesus mean “eat and believe.” And by the way, does anyone besides me have a problem with the verses that say “⁵⁶Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in them.”

What does Jesus mean? I went to several sources to help me understand this statement. All the commentators of this passage pretty much said the same thing. So, I’ll share with you.

“Symbolically, Jesus was referring to the necessity of spiritually partaking in His life, death, and resurrection. To “eat” his body and “drink” his blood means to fully

accept, internalize, and be united with him. This involves believing in his sacrifice and resurrection as the source of spiritual life and following his steps in a holy life. The theological significance of this statement is that Jesus emphasizes that eternal life comes through him. **By using the metaphor of eating and drinking, he signifies that just as food and drink are essential for physical life, he is essential for spiritual life.**

Eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking his blood symbolizes faith and acceptance of his sacrifice. Believers are called to trust in Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection, which provide eternal life.

Another author, Jon Bloom, from “Desiring Jesus”, summarizes this whole encounter with Jesus. “The day before, Jesus had fed 5,000 people with a few loaves and fish. Then that night he *walked* miles *across* the Sea of Galilee before catching up with his disciples in their boat. The crowd had seen him send his disciples away in the only boat available.

So, the next day, when they found him in Capernaum, they knew he could have only got there miraculously. They wanted him to be their king. Then Jesus went and ruined everything. To his adoring fans Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking 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 to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” (John 6:26–27)

Confused, they asked him how they could work to please God. He replied, “This is the work of God, that you **believe** in him whom he has sent” ([John 6:29](#)). God isn’t looking for workers. He’s looking for **believers**.
(Level Two of Believing)

Jesus was a hero to the crowd because he had fed them. But Jesus discerned something very wrong about their enthusiasm. They wanted more “bread from heaven” ([John 6:32](#)).

More Than Bread

But **wanting** the blessings Jesus provides is not the same thing as **believing** in him. Indeed, Jesus **had** come to give them bread from heaven. But not that kind of bread.

So, to test them, he began to make statements that sounded very strange. He told them that he was the true bread from heaven that gives life to the world, and whoever eats this bread would live forever.

Then he said, “And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” ([John 6:51](#)). This sounded like cannibalism. His listeners balked. He pressed it even further: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.” ([John 6:53–55](#))

The “Jesus for King” campaign evaporated. The people walked away, shaking their heads. The crazy man wants us to eat his flesh! They completely misunderstood what Jesus was saying.

So what **did** he mean? Here are the clues:

How do you labor for the food that **endures to eternal life**? “*Believe* in me!” ([John 6:27, 29](#)) “I am the bread of life; whoever **comes** to me [in faith] shall not hunger, and whoever **believes** in me shall never thirst.” ([John 6:35](#)) “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and **believes** in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

([John 6:40](#)) “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever **believes** has eternal life.” ([John 6:47](#))

Compare these words to the ones they spoke at the beginning. (Who does he think he is, Mary’s son from Nazareth?)

For Jesus, **eating is believing; drinking is believing**. He promises eternal life to those who *believe* in him.

But Believe what?

Believe that his death — the breaking of his body and spilling of his blood — pays in full the penalty for our sin, and that his perfect righteousness is freely given to us in exchange for our unrighteousness.

“Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper because he did not want us to forget the very core of what we believe.” Believing this is how we “eat” Jesus’s flesh and “drink” his blood. This is why he instituted the Lord’s Supper:

he did not want us to forget the very core of what we believe.

When the crowd took offense at his gruesome talk, Jesus exposed their unbelief: “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not *believe*” (John 6:63–64). – Jon Bloom

I’m sure I have repeated these words from Jesus many times today. However perhaps we need to hear his words over and over to “seal” them on our hearts; to make them easier to understand; to make the words easier to say out loud and be comfortable saying, “whoever *believes* has eternal life.” There is hope and joy in this message. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”
Collinsville Chorale

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Creator and lover of us all, thank you God for bringing us to this service today, so we could hear the powerful words from Jesus. You, O Holy One, are not looking for gold or silver; you just desire us to believe in who your son is. That is the key to eternal life, not just in this earth life, but forever beside God.

Be with all your children who are suffering from the heat, the rain, the floods, the fires, and from violence. Peace in this world of chaos seems an impossible goal,

yet we know and believe that “Impossible” is not in your vocabulary.

We lift up all those on our prayer list and those we know in our hearts that are suffering. Send your loving arms around each of them.

THE LORD’S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE: 769

**Hear our prayer, O God. Hear our prayer, O God;
Incline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

Ephesians 5 encourages us to “Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise...giving thanks to God at all times and for everything in the name of Jesus Christ.” (vv. 15, 20) We give thanks by trusting God with our resources. We give thanks by using the gifts of God for the kingdom of God. We give thanks by sharing our abundance for the mutual benefit of our community. Give thanks with everything we have.

OFFERTORY: “Meditation on a Scottish Hymn”
Stewart Landon

***DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

Generous and Wise God, you give freely and we receive freely. Sow in us discernment, understanding, and wisdom to be good stewards of the bounty we receive and the resources we have earned. Let us treat them all as gifts to be shared so that none will be in want or need to live full and abundant lives.

***CLOSING HYMN: 55 “Rejoice, You Pure in Heart”**

***BENEDICTION:** May you experience the fullness of life. May abundance be your regular portion. May grace, hope, and generosity be your guide. And may the joy of the Holy One sustain all your days. God in peace to love and serve.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

“Let There Be Peace on Earth”

POSTLUDE: “Ye Servants of God” Roger C. Wilson