



1616 W. Mequon Road, Mequon WI 53092
(262)241-3121 www.stjohnsmequon.org
Email: office@stjohnsmequon.org
Pastor James Tiefel
(262) 853-9723 (cell#)
Email: pastortiefel@gmail.com

August 15, 2021

in the Season after Pentecost

We Cherish Jesus, the Bread of Life

Our lives are filled with needs and wants and we often struggle to prioritize the most important. As Jesus continues his conversation with those who desired to make him an earthly king who would supply earthly needs and wants, he reminds us of the source and value of the heavenly bread that he supplies. Lord, we pray, give us this bread!

First Reading

Proverbs 9:1-6

Heavenly wisdom calls us to his feast of love.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Consider what God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

Gospel

John 6:35-51

The Father and the Son feed us the bread of life.

Sermon

John 6:35-51

Introduction – Once a year my dad would go to the store and buy the biggest and orangest orange he could find. He would bring it to catechism class in the morning so that all the 7th and 8th graders could see it. He would hold it up and say, “This orange is black.” Everybody giggled and shook their heads, but then he would say, “Your pastor says, ‘This orange is black.’” And he walked to each desk, held the orange in front of each face, and asked, “What color is this orange?” Some of the timid kids would say, “Well, I guess it’s black.” But not everybody. Some of the kids said, “Pastor, I don’t care what you say; that orange is orange.” And that’s how he taught that God is always right even when he seems wrong. My dad played the orange game for years.

Very truly I tell you, Jesus said, 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. That’s what Jesus told the people following him in John chapter 6. Basically, he was playing the same game my dad played, except he didn’t use an orange and it wasn’t a game. Just like an orange is orange, bread is bread. Bread is the staff of life: you bake it, you break it, you eat it, and you stay alive. When the Israelites traveled from Egypt to the promised land, God sent them bread from heaven. Moses talked about it, the prophets wrote it about it, and the psalm writers sang about it. Every Jew knew that bread was bread. And then Jesus came to them and said, **I am the Bread of life.** And the people said, “Jesus, we don’t care what you say. The bread from heaven is bread”—just like those students said, “This orange is orange.”

Sometimes people get ideas into their heads that are hard to get rid of. Most Republicans are positive that most Democrats are socialists and most Democrats are sure that most Republicans are racist. Don’t try to persuade a vegan that meat is OK and don’t try to convince a sports fan that his team won’t win. Christians get themselves into the same problem. Little sins don’t really matter. Sickness is a punishment. Coming to church is all God wants.

Sometimes Jesus needs to step into our lives and remind us that the orange is really black even if it seems very orange. That’s what he did in the Gospel for today. The Jews were sure that God’s best gift was bread that saved them from starvation. Jesus needed to convince them that God’s best gift was bread that saved them from hell. Freedom from sin was more important to God than freedom from Rome. God wasn’t nearly as interested in muscle tone and bone

strength as he was in forgiveness and faith. So Jesus made the point—and he makes the same point to us—that bread may be bread, but

The Bread of Life is the Bread Sent from Heaven

A gift from God the Father

A gift for all the world

1. The miracle of Moses and the manna was a really big deal for the people of Israel. They had a God in heaven who could feed them. The tragedy was that they remembered the bread and forgot everything else. The manna was a small part of a much bigger story. God chose the nation of Israel as the place where he would reveal his will and send a Savior. He chose Abraham to father the nation; he sent Moses to lead the nation, David to organize the nation, Nebuchadnezzar to discipline the nation, the prophets to recall the nation, and Cyrus to restore the nation. And so God preserved the nation until God chose a Jewish virgin named Mary to give birth to the Savior. God chose a Jewish man to be her husband and to give the boy the name Jesus because he would save his people from their sins. The Jews remembered the bread in the wilderness but they forgot the Savior of the world.

So here's the point Jesus needed to make to them: The very same God who gave you bread in the wilderness back then is the God who gives you me right now. Listen to how often Jesus mentions God the Father: **All those the Father gives me will come to me. I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.** Jesus and his Father could certainly supply bread; they proved it. But this divine and dynamic duo did much more. Jesus said, **I and the Father are one** and our greatest gift is not to feed you but to free you from sin and death.

The Jewish people got into their heads that God's greatest gift to them was bread. And sometimes we get ourselves caught up with bread too much. Sometimes we invent an incomplete picture of God: He creates our life, grows our body, matures our mind; he sends us rain, grows our crops, gives us food; he fills the oceans, raises the mountains, guides the planets. The Bible says that **The earth is full of the glory for God** and that **the heavens declare the glory of God**. We look around and we believe it! And all of these things become the most important things in our lives. But there is more to the glory of God than that. Isaiah forecast the coming of Christ and he wrote, **And the glory of the Lord will be revealed**. When Jesus was born, the angels sang, **Glory to God in the highest**. Of all God's gifts to us, Jesus is the best. He is the Bread of life whom God sent to live and die and rise again that we might live forever. Thank God for bread but adore God for Jesus. Paul wrote: **God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us**.

2. The bread in the wilderness was called manna. The bread Jesus broke in Galilee came from barley. There's all different kinds of bread: Wheat bread, rice bread, corn bread, even liquid bread—that's what some people call beer. But no bread can do what the Bread of life can do. **I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty**. What Jesus provides never gets rancid or moldy. It never has an expiration date. What Jesus gives is new and fresh every day. Every day it cleanses us of the poison of sin, nourishes us with peace that takes away doubt, strengthens us to be bold when we pray, empowers us to love God's law and to love to obey it. This bread never leaves us hungry and yet, we always want more. This bread keeps us safe; no chemicals or additives here. **Whoever comes to me I will never drive away**, Jesus said, **and those I have I will never lose**. The bread we eat may delay death, but it won't eliminate death. Jesus' bread does. **All who believe in me shall have eternal life and I will raise them up on the last day**.

These Jews chocked and gagged on the bread of life. Jesus said, **You have seen me and still you do not believe**. They saw nothing more than a human being, the son of Joseph. They saw the body but they didn't see the bread. They didn't grasp that it would take a body to save them, a body obligated to obey, a body destined to bleed, and a body able to die. They couldn't admit they needed a Savior like that. But they did and so do we.

Jesus offered his bread to them anyway. Just like he offers this bread to us. And just like he offers this bread to everyone. To those choking on their sins, those gasping for forgiveness, those starving because of fear, and those famished for hope, Jesus gives the Bread of life. He fills us with himself. He makes us alive and keeps us alive and brings us alive into the feast of heaven. **I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**

Don't be fooled by the orange. God the Father's greatest and grandest gift is not your family or your education or your savings or your health, as good as those gifts are. The gift God sent you from heaven is his Son, Jesus Christ, the Bread of life. And he gives this gift to everyone, even to me and even to you. Amen.