

## Bread of Life

**John 6:24-58** So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. <sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not labor 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." <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> 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." <sup>41</sup> So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup> They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me- <sup>46</sup> not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." <sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "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. <sup>54</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 No food will satisfy your hunger. No amount of soup—delicious though it is—can fill you up for good. Even the finest meal will get digested and expelled. Even if you gorge yourself ‘til you’re sick and bloated, swearing you’ll never eat again, you’ll get hungry later, and you’ll eat again. You might think that with food in the refrigerator and regular meals on the table, even if not the finest fare, it’s hard to be hungry. But you are. You eat and eat, and never seem to be full.

2 You feast not just on food, but also on things. The hunger burns within you, so you pile more onto your plate. You fill yourself with your job and your hobbies, hoping these can satisfy your hunger. You heap portions of possessions before yourself, wistfully wanting them to quell the ache within you. You fill your schedule, your gas tank, your house, and nothing seems to satisfy for long. You consume what you can afford and still seem to want more. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures. Repent. Repent of trying to feed yourself when the food you need is nothing you can provide.

3 The problem is that you’ve misdiagnosed your hunger. This is the point of Lenten fasting: to be hungry. Hunger disciplines you; it tells you temporarily to say no to your body’s desires; and bodily hunger teaches you that there’s an even greater hunger within you. This hunger you cannot satisfy with food that you can earn. Even if you ate manna in the wilderness with the Israelites, you’d be hungry later. Even if you were among the crowd of thousands who ate fish and barley loaves from Jesus, you’d need another meal in a few hours. The problem is that your body is dying. And food only sustains you until the day of your death. It doesn’t stop the progression toward death.

4 You’re hungry for life. But unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on the flesh and blood of Jesus has eternal life. Life: that’s precisely what you need. Jesus twice in today’s Gospel lesson says of Himself, “I am the bread of life.” Where does this bread come from? “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies,” Jesus said, “It remains a single seed, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (Jn

12:24) Life comes to you because the Bread of Life came to die. Jesus Christ, whose flesh is true life-giving food and whose blood is true sin-forgiving drink is the one who while nailed to the cross announced, "I thirst." The Bread of Life is the Bread that fed the enemy death until he was over-filled. Sin is satisfied, and death can eat no more. Jesus, the Bread of Life, died in your place. And through His gift of faith, He bids you eat of the bread of life.

5 The true body and blood of your Lord Jesus Christ under bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself, for you to eat and drink, this is the Sacrament of the Altar, the Lord's Supper. The Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me." In the same way also He took the cup after supper and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

6 What is the benefit of this eating and drinking? These words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. Jesus' words do what they promise. He delivers to you in the holy meal of the Lord's Supper the Bread of Life, His real flesh and blood.

7 Luther says, "Thus you see that we are not granted liberty to despise the sacrament. For I call it despising when people, with nothing to hinder them, let a long time elapse without ever desiring the sacrament. If you want such liberty, you may just as well take the further liberty not to be a Christian; then you need not believe or pray, for the one is just as much Christ's commandment as the other" So repent of despising this meal from the Lord, the foretaste of the eternal feast which is to come.

8 In the Lord's Supper, the Lord delivers through His body and blood forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. You certainly are by no means worthy of these gifts, but precisely because

you were in need of them, the Lord gives them to you. Precisely because you were dying, the Lord feeds you with life. “We come as poor miserable people, precisely because we are unworthy.” Our need is so great, that we must receive this spiritual nourishment, the bread and wine of life, the body and blood of the Lord, as often as possible.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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