

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, August 4, 2024, based on John 6 "Bread of Life".

I love Kwik Trip. I am one of those people who grab a shopping cart when I walk in. I sometimes stock up on staples for the week... two gallons of milk, two dozen eggs, bacon, bananas, and bread. Then they make you go by those temptation tables with cinnamon rolls, banana cake, dunkers, and glazers on the way to the checkout. Great marketing plan on their part! But no matter what I buy at Kwik Trip, I will be hungry again. And even then, I can't think of many times in my life that I missed a meal.

Our lessons today talk about food, and in particular... bread. We aren't talking rich foods like lobster or caviar... but something basic and necessary for life... bread. The word "bread" appears 330 times in the Bible. There is bread... the kind we eat, and then there is the bread of God, a metaphor to describe how our faith in Jesus satisfies our deepest hungers.

What are you hungering or thirsting for these days? Peace in our world. Peace in our homes. Healing for our bodies or relationships. Direction in life. Rest. Help to overcome addiction. Or Hope in the future.

Well, if we take Jesus at his word in John 6 when he says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Then we have reason for hope.

In our Gospel known as the bread of life chapter in John 6, Jesus sees the crowds following him after he fed the 5000. They are looking at Jesus as a sort of bread ATM. He fed us once, he will feed us again. They realize that Jesus is the source of something they need. But then Jesus says, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

They are thinking what do I have to do to earn this food? What kind of work do I have to do? Jesus responds. This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. In other words, Simply believing in Jesus is enough. In fact the main purpose of John's Gospel is to tell the story of Jesus for others to come to believe in him.

The promise of eternal life is a gift from God that comes from Jesus and believing in Jesus.

And one thing about eternal life in John's Gospel. It isn't just after we die. It is something we can taste now. It is sometimes referred to as abundant in the Gospel. It is a full life, a contented life. Jesus says in John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." The word know here is an intimate knowing. It is a relationship with Jesus like a close friend or companion.

Speaking of companion. Did you know the Latin root of the word "companion" is bread. "Pan" in Latin means bread. Panera is a bread restaurant. Companion is someone to share bread with.

So simply trusting in Jesus promises, believing in him, or having faith in him will mean that everything necessary for your life to be sustained will be provided by Jesus or the companions he surrounds you with.

But do we always look in the right place to be filled up? Or do we try to go it alone, or place our trust in possessions, or personal success, or in what others think of us?

As Lutherans, we believe that faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It comes through hearing the Gospel... the good news of Jesus... the Holy Spirit works in us awakening and creating faith. It calls us to be companions to others... people to come alongside others and share the bread of God with them. That could be bread, bread, or holy communion, or the word of God. It could be just sitting with them.

By Jesus saying he is the bread of life. He is saying I am necessary for life.

Today, Jesus gives us what we need. He is the bread of life. He gives of himself in the word and simple bread and wine. In that meal we are filled up and completely forgiven. In Christ, we can experience eternal life and abundant life even in times when we are in the wilderness or up against it.

Jesus says, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Amen