

## Real Bread or Real Jesus?

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Year B: Pent 11: John 6:24-35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for 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 for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who 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.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

*Our real faith transformation comes not in knowing what Jesus can do for us, but rather who He is! “I am the Bread of Life.”*

If you’ve been watching any of the Olympics, you’ve seen the media frenzy with the most famous athletes such as Simone Biles, Caeleb Dressel, Katie Ledecky, or Leon Marchand. The crowds and the tv cameras can’t get enough of them. Their every move is watched.

So it was with Jesus after He fed the 5000, in our text from last weekend. It was common that first century Galileans regularly didn’t have enough food. When Jesus healed *some* of them and then fed *all* of them, He suddenly had superstar rabbi status! They follow Jesus across the lake to find Him. They want more bread!

Well, of course they do. Who can blame them? You and I get hungry after just 3-4 hours. We’ve trained our bodies to think they need to eat regularly. But real

hunger doesn't end after only one meal. It rises again and again with the morning sunrise. Jesus had their attention.

Travel with me back to the book of Exodus, chapter 16. Moses has led the people through the Red Sea to safety away from Pharaoh and the Egyptians who had enslaved them. The Israelites complained to Moses. "Why did you bring us here to die in the wilderness of hunger when we had all we could eat back in Egypt?" Well, the Lord God heard their complaints and said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day...this way you shall know I am the LORD your God." (16:4ff) God had their attention.

Now, in Capernaum, Jesus isn't ready to give the crowds real bread because He knows what they really need, the real Jesus. They don't need more bagels with lox, these dear people need Him! They are not yet prepared for the truth.

Jesus knows that true human transformation takes place when you and I recognize not only what Jesus can do for us (feed people real bread), but rather who Jesus is.<sup>i</sup>  
"I am the bread of life." (Repeat)

This week, we've watched with anticipation each new post or video about the fire. We're concerned about our neighbors, families, homes and evacuees. The Fire Incident Command gives detailed information about wind speed, fire direction, the work they will try to accomplish each day and number of personnel working the fires. Those are the details.

And...for those brave men and women who are on the front lines digging trenches and flying the airplanes dropping water and fuel retardant, they know the power of fire. They see it in all its commanding glory and its potential to destroy. At those moments, the fire personnel know its heat. They see the flames. I'm guessing – there are moments of awe.

Jesus doesn't want to give the people another handout, until they begin to see His power. Until they feel the awe of the One standing in front of them who says, "I am the bread of life." It's not a punishment, it is the Teacher, providing them the building blocks of faith. The awe of God is their answer.

Sometimes, we humans treat God as a holy pop and candy machine. We expect that when we put in our prayers (money), and punch our selection, God will eject

out the solution, or the answer, or whatever it is we desire. “What sign will you do for us next, Jesus? We want more bread!”

Last Sunday I spoke of a food desert only 7 miles from downtown Houston. ELCA World Hunger has long held the belief that if we walk alongside people and help feed them, then deeper conversations about God can begin to take place.

At Alice’s Garden, in Milwaukee, WI, people are learning to grow their own food. ‘Alice’s Garden in Milwaukee, Wis., a two-acre urban farm, community garden and gathering place for the ELCA worshipping community called The Table. Alice’s Garden works with families, teaching them to grow their own food and build their own businesses, to love and respect the land, and to be caretakers of creation. Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger help unique communities such as The Table — where worship happens on a farm in urban Milwaukee — thrive and adapt in a rapidly changing world.’

‘At the garden, neighbors participated in outdoor culinary classes, reading circles and yoga classes. At The Table, a “first-century-style community in the 21st century,” they gathered to worship and share food.’<sup>ii</sup>

I know that many of us have very real challenges in our lives this morning. We are hungering for peace for our adult children and their relationships. We are hungry for our own bodies to work better. We are hungry for more justice in our community and world. We are hungry for fewer wars and conflict. We are hungry for fires and smoke to stop and our clear blue Colorado skies to open up once more.

Jesus incarnate, is with us as the Savior who understands all pain and suffering because of the Cross. This God is so full of grace and mercy, unending love and joy. Christ is the true Life. Through the Holy Spirit, as we stand in awe before Him, He creates an ever-deepening hunger for God alone. Bread eases hunger. But Jesus is God, who alone can provide peace when homes and wildlife are destroyed, marriages crumble, or the cancer returns. Real faith transformation comes when we begin to hunger for the real Jesus, not simply real bread.

Are we hungry? Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> N.T.Wright. John for Everyone.Part 1.Westminster John Knox Press.2004. Pg. 79.

<sup>ii</sup> Lifelines. ELCA World Hunger. Spring 2022. Pg.6.