

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
August 18, 2024  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
The Bread That Gives Wisdom and Life  
John 6:24-51 (EHV)

*“I am the Bread of Life,” Jesus told them. “The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have also seen me, and you do not believe. <sup>37</sup>Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do my 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 none of those he has given me, but raise them up on the Last Day. <sup>40</sup>For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the Last Day.”*

*<sup>41</sup>So the Jews started grumbling about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup>They asked, “Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? So how can he say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”*

*<sup>43</sup>Jesus answered them, “Stop grumbling 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, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup>I am not saying that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He is the one who has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Amen, Amen, I tell you: The one who believes in me has eternal life.*

*<sup>48</sup>“I am the Bread of Life. <sup>49</sup>Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”*

Dear Friends in Christ,

I was a preschooler when the Lord drew me into his family through baptism. Maybe you remember things about when you were 3 or 4 years old, but I don't remember much of anything. There were several years when I did not have faith in Jesus but I don't remember these years. I don't know by experience what it is like to be outside of the family of God. Many of you were probably baptized as infants and had even less time on this earth without Christ. All you've known is Jesus as your Savior. All you've known is that Jesus loves you, died for you, rose from the dead and will return to raise you to life everlasting. What a blessing to have been brought into the family of faith through baptism at an early age and taught the truths of Scripture by our parents.

But some of you might have the experience of being drawn to faith in Christ at an age when you can remember. You know by experience what it was like to live without Christ. You know what was like to be outside the family of God. Your excitement and appreciation for what Christ has done for you might exceed that of the almost lifelong believer, like me. I pray that through the Word of God in John 6 this morning, the Lord would lead us all to a deeper appreciation for being drawn to Christ and that we would be the instruments God uses to draw others to him as well.

As Jesus continues his Bread of Life discourse, he clearly tells us that believing in him is not something we could do on our own.

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The Jews who have gathered around Jesus have seen his miracles. They have eaten the bread Jesus miraculously divided for the 5000. They have listened to his teaching. Yet, some do not believe that Jesus is the Bread of Life. They do not believe that Jesus is the promised Savior. But the disciples and some others did believe in Christ. They all got to see and hear Jesus directly. Why did some believe while others did not?

We might wonder the same today. As thinking human beings, we naturally begin to find reasons for why we believe, and others don't. Maybe I'm just a little smarter than other people. I figured it out. I put together the clues in the Bible and discovered that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world. My intellect is the reason I believe, and others don't. Or maybe we think our goodness is the reason we believe. God drew me into his family because I made the cut. I was less sinful than the mass murderers, the idol worshipers and the serial adulterers.

We need to recognize these thoughts for what they are – false and harmful to our faith. Whether we think we had something to do with choosing to believe or think God chose us to believe because of something in us, we are taking glory from God. We can't have a deep appreciation for being in Christ's family if we take credit, even a little, for being in the family. Jesus makes it clear, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

The Father drawing people to Christ is a beautiful image. The Father does not force people to believe. He does not use his almighty power to enslave people against our will. Instead, he draws us with his compelling love. In the reading from Proverbs, wisdom sends out her invitation in a compelling way. Everything has been prepared – the room, the food, the drink. It is all ready. But she does not force anyone to come to the feast. The naïve, in other words, those who confess that they are not wise enough or good enough, are the ones who receive wisdom and understanding from the Lord. Paul tells the Corinthians that true wisdom is not from the world. God reveals the mystery to people through his Spirit.

In love, the Father sent his only Son for us. In love, Christ provided his own flesh as the payment for the sin of the world. In love, the Holy Spirit changed our hearts and minds so that we believe in Christ. Even before the creation of the world, God planned out our salvation through Jesus. He prepared everything, completed everything and brought us to faith. He drew us to himself with his unending love. How can we not appreciate our Father in heaven whether we were 3, 13 or 103 years old when he drew us to Christ?

Having a deep appreciation for our God by recognizing that we are saved only by grace through faith in Christ and even faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit helps us when living among people who do not yet believe. We could easily become frustrated with people who do not believe. I've told them about Jesus. They should know that they need Jesus. The gospel is so simple. Why don't they get it? We could easily get angry and upset when unbelievers in the world mock Christianity, deny Christ, or live in unbiblical ways. But what should we expect from those who have not yet been drawn to Christ by the Father? The Jews who were listening to Jesus didn't get it. How could Jesus be from heaven when they knew his mother and thought they knew who his father was? How can this man promise to raise the dead? How can he give his flesh to save the world? It should not surprise us when those without the Spirit do not believe the things only the Spirit can reveal.

Instead of being frustrated, angry, upset or giving up, remember how God drew you to faith. Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Surely, we can be patient with those not yet drawn

to Christ by the Father. We see how Jesus continued to reach out to those who did not yet believe in him. He told them difficult things – about the resurrection of the dead; about his divine nature, coming down from heaven; about giving his flesh as payment to save the world; about salvation through faith in him. Jesus told them these truths because the Holy Spirit works through these gospel truths to save people. The Father draws people to Christ through these gospel truths.

So, we proclaim these gospel truths. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. We proclaim salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. We do this with patience, compassion and kindness because we were all without Christ at one time. Patience with those who do not yet believe is so important. The gospel invitation to believe in Christ is powerful to turn a heart to faith, but that is God's work in God's time. We may get the excitement of being the instrument God uses to bring the Bread of Life to someone so that they receive eternal life. Or maybe we bring the Bread of Life to someone once and never see them again. Or perhaps we bring the Bread of Life to someone year after year after year and never see any change of heart. It is the Father who draws people to faith through the work of the Holy Spirit, not us. Leave the results to God.

Simply hold open the door and invite people to the feast of God's wisdom. Reveal the mystery of salvation found in the Son of God who became flesh, dwelled among us, and gave his flesh for us. Tell people what Jesus says about himself, *"I am the Bread of Life...The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

Amen.