

Midweek Lenten Vespers #4
St. John 6:36-51
March 22nd, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I AM the Bread of Life

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Mankind has always had a hard time believing that the Lord God will provide for all of their needs. Even when the fact is staring them in the face. This was the case with the Jews in today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John. The Jews had witnessed the great miracle that we heard about on Sunday, the Feeding of the Five Thousand. They saw the Lord + Jesus provide food in the wilderness for thousands of people from just five barley loaves and two small fish. They ate as much as they wanted and were full. There were even twelve baskets leftover of those pieces that were not eaten. And yet, what does our Lord + Jesus deal with in today's Gospel pericope? He deals with the unbelief of the Jews.

They saw the miracle and yet did not believe. The problem was they could not get past the fact that they knew His parents. They say, “Is this not the Son of Joseph, Whose father and mother we know?” They only viewed the Lord + Jesus in earthly terms. He was just another man to them. They even have a hard time, it seems, associating Him as being sent by the Lord God; as a prophet sent from the Lord God. They could not make the connection that the Lord God and this Man + Jesus were both the same. This Man + Jesus was both God and man.

This our Lord + Jesus tries to teach the Jews in today's reading. He had come down from Heaven. He had come down to take upon Himself our flesh. The Lord God became man. This was the Father's will; that the Lord + Jesus would come down to be the Bread of Life for all those who believe on Him. The Jews saw the works of the Lord and still did not believe. We were not alive at that time and so we did not see these works that our Lord + Jesus did, and yet, we still believe. What is the difference between the Jews from this chapter of the Gospel of St. John and us? It is that we have been drawn to the Lord + Jesus by the heavenly Father. We are drawn to the Christ on account of the pure preaching of the Word of God. We hear what our Lord + Jesus has done for us, and we believe.

For the Lord + Jesus has come down from Heaven for us. This we firmly believe because we know how much we hunger and thirst after righteousness. We know that we are poor, miserable sinners. We know that we cannot save ourselves by our works. Therefore, our Lord + Jesus came down from Heaven to satisfy our hunger and thirst for righteousness. He came to perform the works which we are unable to perform. He fulfilled the Law, and bestows His righteousness upon us. In Holy Baptism we have been clothed with the Christ. We have both been united to Him in His death, and raised again with Him in His resurrection. Through His Holy Ghost, He created faith in us. So that we now cling to Him and His works, and rejoice that we have been clothed in His perfect righteousness, so that we know that our sins have been covered over. They are no longer credited to us.

As a further testimony that our hunger and thirst for righteousness has been satisfied by the works we have seen our Lord + Jesus do through the faith gifted to us, our Lord + Jesus gives us of Himself. He gives us the Bread from Heaven. We eat His Body and drink His Blood in bread and wine as a testimony that we do indeed have the remission of sins.

The Israelites in the wilderness following Moses were fed by the Lord God with manna. They were given bread from Heaven. But this bread only satisfied their earthly flesh. They ate of it, and their physical hunger was satisfied, but they eventually still died. This manna was a prefiguration of the Lord + Jesus. For the Lord + Jesus would also come down from Heaven and be food for all those who cling to Him in faith. He is our Bread from Heaven. But unlike manna, our Lord + Jesus is the Living Bread from Heaven. Those who eat of Him do not see death. For death is caused by sin. Death is the penalty for our sins. Since all have sinned, all men die.

But we who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus have been drawn to the heavenly Father through the pure preaching of the Word. The preaching that our Lord + Jesus has come down from Heaven to fulfill and the Law and pay the penalty of our sins with His own death. His death satisfies the requirement that we die for our sins. He died for our sins by suffering and dying on the tree of the holy cross. We cling to this work of our Lord + Jesus in faith, and we remember and show this death whenever we eat His Body and drink His Blood in bread and wine at this altar to receive the remission of our sins. This meal gives us life—eternal life—with our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ. For His Body and Blood is truly food and drink from Heaven which satisfies our hunger and thirst for righteousness.

For He is the Living Bread come down from Heaven which if a man eat of, He will never see nor taste death. The manna which fed the Israelites in the wilderness was a foretaste of this Living Bread. The bread and fishes which fed the five thousand in the wilderness, that we heard about this past Sunday, was a foreshadowing of this Living Bread. For these things point to the Christ being the source of forgiveness and life for all those who have been drawn to Him by the heavenly Father. These works of the Lord point to the meal that our Lord + Jesus would establish for the sustaining of our faith in this world filled with sin and death.

For this meal points to the reason that our Lord + Jesus came into this world. He came to give Himself up as a ransom for us, and all mankind, so that all those who believe on Him might have eternal life. This was the will of the Father, that the Lord + Jesus would lose no one that was drawn to Him by the Father. For all those drawn to the Lord + Jesus believe that He has come down to give us life and salvation.

The Jews murmured about the statements of the Lord + Jesus. They did not believe that He could give Himself for them. They could only see a man, born of human parents; they could only see the Son of Joseph and Mary. They disregarded His works because of what they chose to see. Therefore, they did not believe on Him, nor desire to receive eternal life and salvation and forgiveness from Him. We have believed even though we have not seen our Lord + Jesus. We have only heard of His wonderful works that He has done for us. But He has left us a wonderful testament of His love for

us. He has left us a glorious testament that He has indeed given Himself to us; that He has come down from Heaven to be our Living Bread.

In the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, we feast upon the Lord + Jesus. We eat of the Living Bread which has come down from Heaven. He has come down to win salvation for all mankind. He gives this salvation to all those who cling to Him in faith. For we are taught by the heavenly Father by the preaching of the pure Word of God that His Son—His Only-Begotten and Beloved Son—has come down from Heaven to satisfy our hunger and thirst for righteousness by giving Himself to us so that we may never taste of death. Thanks be to the Lord God! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!