

## Written Copy: John 6:35-40 “What You Need, The Bread of Life”

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday @ Pentecost: Proper 14

Sunday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### Text: John 6:35-40

<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."

### The text's intent

While Jesus, as God in human form provides what is needed for our temporal lives now, being the life giver, and having life within Himself, He comes to provide all that is needed for life now and eternal life to come. This is His gift to all men, but many refuse to believe the witness and call He makes in Scripture. I can't choose to make Him this for me, but the Father has chosen me and sent the Spirit to open my eyes to see Jesus as the Bread that satisfies my body and soul, the one thing needed to have life now and eternal life to come.

### Focus Statement:

Jesus says "I AM, Myself, the Bread of Life. I AM the staple food for body and soul. I provide all that you temporally and spiritually for now and stretching all the way to eternal life to come. He comes and changes our hearts so that we stop hungering for temporal gifts and instead hunger for the personal and intimate relationship He creates in us by faith. He comes to unite Himself with us. He comes as the source of life now and eternal life to come. He promises that whatever troubles come He will not cast us away from Him, even though we sin, but unite Himself with us as we eat His Body and Drink His blood, as we make His death and resurrection the truth and reality "for me".

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

Like Elijah we get ground down and discouraged by all the things we see as failures in our life. We see all the troubles that come as defeat. We hunger for earthly things and look to Jesus to provide only what is needed now, forgetting about the greater and eternal needs we have.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

When we are beaten down see Him as the giver of the Bread of Life, life lived with Him now, in His very presence, and eternal life to come. He raises us up now to serve Him and will raise us up on the Last Day.

### Subject Sentence: Jesus is all I need for life now and for eternity

## **Introduction: Ground Down and Wanting to Give Up Like Elijah**

**1 Kings 19:4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."**

Picture Elijah as he lays down under that broom tree. The broom tree is actually more of a bush than what we would call a tree. It grows in the hot wilderness places in Palestine and, for those traveling, is the primary source of shade to find relief from the sun. It provides just enough shade for one man. Elijah is a man beaten down, beaten down so hard he doesn't want to go on. He's afraid, and on top of that, he feels totally defeated.

You see, he had just come from a literal spiritual mountaintop experience. The LORD had worked through him to prove to the Northern Kingdom of Israel that their god, Baal, was no God at all. Praying to Baal couldn't bring the rain to end the drought. Baal couldn't even bring down fire to consume the offering set up on an altar to him. That's because, as Elijah well knew, Baal didn't exist. But the LORD God; He brought fire down to consume not just the offering set out on the altar, but the very stones from which the altar was made! He proved to all the nation in attendance, including King Ahab, that He alone is God. And to emphasize this Elijah killed all of the priests of Baal who had led God's people astray. And then, in response to Elijah's prayer, He ended the drought ending the drought that had lasted 3 ½ years with a rainstorm. It was a drenching rain that King Ahab had to drive his chariot through heading back to his palace. Elijah was thinking, 'Now things will change. The people and their king will turn back in faith to the LORD God.'

But that was not the case. Queen Jezebel, who was the real power behind the throne wasn't fazed by her husband's account of all that happened. She sent a messenger to Elijah warning him that by this time tomorrow he would be as dead, just as he had done to her priests of Baal. Elijah left town in a hurry. And so we see him here in the wilderness under the broom tree. He sees himself a failure, no better than his fathers. God sent him to be His prophetic witness, and Elijah feels he has failed at it. In his mind he is the only one left who believes in and worship's the LORD. He is ready to give up. He's tired and frightened. It's too much for him to handle on his own.

You may not have found yourself laid out under a broom tree this week, but I'll bet you know something of how Elijah felt. You know about those times in life when it's just one problem after another. The car breaks down and you shell out the money to get it fixed only to come home and find your air conditioner isn't working. And what that will cost makes the cost of your car repair seem like chump change. You help one of your children through a difficult time only to have another one enter crisis mode. You or a loved one has an operation that is supposed to fix your pain and allow you to return to a more productive life only to find the rehab is not doing what it's supposed to do. You or a loved one is diagnosed with cancer, and the treatment successfully removes it, only to find you now have a different problem the doctors are concerned about.

We look around us in the world and see violence on the rise, unending political wrangling and gamesmanship that isn't addressing the problems we face as a nation. And on top of all that there is the COVID-19 Delta variant. Just when it looked like our country was headed toward finding a new normal, and we could say goodbye to masks and social distancing, the worry and fear seems to have returned. All of this can begin to overwhelm us and we find ourselves headed into the same kind of fear, disappointment, and depression that Elijah felt.

### **How the LORD Responds**

And how did the LORD respond to Elijah's request that his life be ended? **1 Kings 19:5-6** <sup>5</sup> **And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat."** <sup>6</sup> **And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again.** The angel returned and fed him again. **1 Kings 19:8** **And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.** This was no ordinary food. This was a supernatural gift from the LORD. The food strengthened Elijah's body, and the gift raised up His spirit and gave him the fortitude and change of heart he needed to continue on to the place where the LORD would meet with Him and renew his prophetic call. Elijah was in need, but he didn't pray for this gift, the LORD sent it to him. The LORD sent him just what He needed at that time. Has the LORD ever come to you and given you just what you needed at just the right time?

Perhaps yes, but there are those times when we've prayed that He would end a bad, fearful situation, but it keeps on happening. The resurgence of COVID-19 Delta Variant is a good example. Just when it looked like we were beating the disease it came roaring back. We prayed that He would take it away, we thought it was going away, and now here it is back again. We can wonder where is the LORD? Why is He not responding? Perhaps we are looking for the wrong kind of response

The Jews that Jesus is speaking to were looking for the LORD to come and act on their behalf. They wanted to be saved from the drudgery of their lives as occupied people. And along comes Jesus who can heal the sick, raise the dead. They think that maybe He could be the one sent by God to help us. But the help they are looking for is only with temporal earthly things. And they have a greater need beyond that. He is the One sent by God to do more than help them, to save them. But they didn't recognize this, and didn't believe Him to be the Messiah, because He didn't fit the bill for what they thought they needed most.

**John 6:35 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."**

Jesus says, "I AM". The name that the LORD gave Israel to know and worship Him by was "Yahweh", which means "I AM WHO I AM". This is Jesus calling Himself God, and at the same time explaining what that should mean to them. He is explaining that He came to be God who is the "bread of life". Back then bread was the staple food that was eaten at every meal. You needed bread and water to survive and without it you would die. Jesus is using "bread" as a metaphor because these Jews were seeking Him to make Him king because He had miraculously fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves of bread. They're thinking, 'that's what we need, a man sent by God that can give us an endless supply of the earthly things we need'. But Jesus was already doing that as a member of the Trinity, who provided the rain, made the wheat grow, gave them the tools to make wheat into bread, and the fire to bake it. The Feeding of the 5,000 was not the answer to their problems. It was to show them that He Himself is the answer. He is God incarnate who has come to provide them with a need that was far greater than what their bellies craved.

He had come from the Father as God incarnate to be something greater than mere bread, He came to be the "Bread of Life". As God the Son He is the author of life, the very God that blew life into the nostrils of Adam and Eve and made them to be living beings. He is the source of the life you and I have today. The life Adam and Eve were given was a life lived in the intimate presence of the LORD. That life ended when Adam and Eve disobeyed. The tree of life was removed from their presence, and they began an existence of slowly dying. And when physical death came it only led to an eternity of suffering and dying apart from the LORD who loved them and created them. Jesus is God incarnate who had come to restore that Tree of Life to mankind. And the fruit of the tree Jesus brings is the Bread of Life, the staple food that you and I need for body and soul to change our situation from a life of eternal dying, to a life lived in the presence of our LORD now. A life that never ends. While our bodies continue to die in this world our souls do not.

**John 6:51 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."**

Here Jesus gives us the answer to understand this metaphor of “bread”. The living bread that is God’s gift to us is Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. It is His perfect life given over into suffering and death for you and for me. It is His taking our place and suffering the eternal death that should be your lot and mine, and in place of that giving to us what He earned by His perfect obedience, a return to a life lived in the intimate presence of God now and eternal life to come. And how do we eat of this “bread”? How do we receive the gift of life now and eternal life to come from Jesus’ death and resurrection? By the free gift of faith.

**John 6:36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.**

So why couldn’t they see Him for what He is? Why didn’t they recognize and believe in Him? They still saw just a man. Despite the miracles they witnessed, on their own they could not see and believe the truth that this man was also something that had never been before or would be again. This man is God, with the power of God to be the Bread of Life, to give His life for the salvation of the world.

**John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.**

As Luther says in the Small Catechism **“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.** The Father sent the Spirit into your life. In your baptism He called you, and continues to call you through the Gospel preached, read, and sung. And once He has thus called you, He will never let you go. You can, by separating yourself from the means of grace fade away from Him. But He keeps after you, calling you back.

**John 6:39-40 <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.”**

The Father sent His only Son to grant mankind access once again to the tree of life. Notice that Jesus doesn’t say that those who “look on the Son (by faith) and believe in Him will, on the Last Day, receive this gift of eternal life”, He says that you have it now! While your body will succumb to death in this world, your soul will not. The Spirit has come to take up residence with you now and live in an intimate relationship with you. And when you have the Spirit, you also have the Son. You have the source of life and the giver of life living in you and with you every single day. You have the One who sends His angels to protect you and guard you from any evil force that would try to hurt you and end your life before He says it’s time, whether that force be disease, or violent men, or COVID-19, or the devil himself. He protects not just your body but your soul. He comes to you just as He did when Elijah was ready to die and feeds you what you need right now physically and spiritually. He protects your faith so that even when you feel ground down you will not fall away.

With Elijah He sent an angel with supernatural food. With you He sends His Word through all that you hear during the Divine Service. But He doesn't stop there, He sends this spiritual strengthening in a very special way. He comes to you supernaturally in Holy Communion. The Lord who is the Bread of Life comes to you in, with, and under the bread and the wine, being really and truly present in your hand, in your mouth, and in your body. He comes to strengthen your body and soul to life everlasting. He comes so that you will, despite all the burdens and problems that bring you down, remain in His loving hands. He comes to strengthen you and keep you safe in your life lived with Him now, held up and encouraged by His constant presence. And He holds before you the gift that is yours on the Last Day. He will raise you up your body and place your cleansed and redeemed soul inside it. And you will live forever in that perfect paradise that was His gift to Adam and Eve and will be restored for you and me on that Last Day.

## **Conclusion**

We sometimes feel like Elijah. We look at the world and forget that God is in control. We look to the work of our own hands and the work of others for the answers. And when our efforts or the works of others don't pan out, don't solve the problem, we despair. Like the Jews we expect God to remove all our problems forever and keep us healthy and happy all the days of our lives. And when that prayer isn't answered we despair and lose hope. But just as He did with Elijah, our LORD comes to us. He comes to us not to make our lives like heaven on earth, but instead He comes to be the Bread of Life who give us what really need. He gives us His real presence right now, and His promise that He will never abandon you. He is with you, His real presence in your heart by baptism. He is here with you now with in His Word, and in your mouth and your body and soul in the Sacrament. He gives you the power to consume the Bread of Life by faith. He doesn't always remove all your problems and concerns. He doesn't always make our lives better in the way we want Him to. But He makes us better, He strengthens us so that with Him we are equal to whatever lies ahead. He gives to us the hope and promise of His presence that is truly with us now, and the hope that He will raise up our bodies on the Last Day to make us perfect, to live in the perfection of the eternity to come. May He be working in you and with you, during the good and bad times, as the Bread of Life for you. Amen.