



# Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

## Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

August 12, 2018

### With Jesus --- The Bread of Life

John 6:41-51, 60-71

Week three of a three week series...we will have looked at 71 of the 1171 verses in the longest of the gospels; it is, I believe, a critical bridge between getting to know Jesus and moving forward in mission. There are five questions to carry us along on this Lord's Day.

1. **Who is Jesus?** Week one began to give us a few cues. Recall that this Gospel was compiled some 82 years AFTER the death and resurrection and to a Christian community pretty well established, but experiencing some conflict, some persecution, likely competition from drift away and some wanting to return the ways of the Jewish tradition.

So, in the narrative, pace had picked up and the crowds were gathering around Jesus because of His reputation that He spoke with authority as no other and healed often. So we began with two miracles: the Feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on water. Pretty good start!

We know that Philip wondered how to feed so many, Andrew promoted the truth that a little boy had five barley loaves and two fish. But, alas, all were fed with leftovers filling 12 baskets. And we noted that, unlike the first three Gospels where the disciples were the servers, Jesus feeds them all as much as they wanted.

"Who is Jesus?" The fed ones said. "This man really is The Prophet, the One coming into the world." They wanted to make him their Bread King.

Jesus escaped as the disciples took sail to the other side of the lake with a great storm. They were terrified and saw Jesus walking on the water. He said "I AM/ego emi" (the name of God in the first covenant).

We said that this Jesus is the Word made flesh, the powering presence of God on earth. And we are finding that Jesus is always out ahead of us in mission!

2. **What is Jesus?** The crowds could not find Him; He was on the other side with the 12. Looking very hard, they found him and said "Rabbi, teacher how did you get here?" And He engaged in the "what" question.

Noting that they sought Him because of a sign, lots of food/want more-ism. And He revealed that they would best seek the good food that will “stay with you clear into deep lasting life, the food (What is Jesus?) that the Son of Man (me), on whom God the Father has set His seal of approval.” (Seal is synonym for Baptism in the earliest Church.)

The One sent from the ONE! Yet, perhaps like each one of us, they sought, we often seek, some other sign! SHOW US AND WE WILL/Might come around. In the words that surround the seeking, Jesus makes clear that He is “I, I AM the bread of life. The person simply coming to me will never ever go hungry, the person simply trusting me will never ever go thirsty—never!”

And all of this gets woven/knitted into the ultimate query...

3. **What must WE do?** What works are required of us? What are the demands on us?

And Jesus reaches right into their hearts and sets the bar of salvation, freely given: RECEIVE AND BELIEVE! Pretty simple, be open wide the landscape of redemption, forgiveness of all things and the place to live and be in the Abundant Life! Deep, everlasting life! And here is the key that unlocks life in Christ: THAT YOU TRUST THE ONE THAT THE ONE SENT!

Once a friend gave me a gift, beautifully boxed and wrapped. I looked at it and asked, “What is it?” He said, “You have missed the point. Receive it, take it, and open it!” Trusting the one who cared and shared with me!

4. **What is truth?** Today’s reading engages the quest of our time too. Who holds the truth? And in that and in every time, how can we really know?

Here is the missional moment: Jesus has been called Prophet to Come, Rabbi. Now as the religious grumble and look back to say, “Wait, this is Jesus, son of Joseph, the son of Mary, we know his dad and mom. COME ON, HA, HOW CAN HE SAY ‘I’ve come down from heaven?’”

Seems like a “fork in the road.” But, when it comes to commitment dare we, can we take it, and trust it to be way into truth that is LIFE?

And the trust pitch is for us each day too. Can you hear the voice of Jesus for you? “Every one, for God so loved the world that God sent the Son, and the ones who trust that I am the way to the Father are the ones who in simply trusting have deep, lasting LIFE. Here I AM, THE LIVING BREAD, EAT, LIVE FOREVER.” This is, I am sure, a clear image of what it is we receive week after week with Jesus as host who feeds the millions at the table that they, that we, might share that we have been with Jesus and KNOW, believe, teach, and confess that only in Jesus is the LIFE that COUNTS AS WE RECEIVE THE SPIRIT AND ARE LIFE.

GIVE ME JESUS...” And when I want to sing and when I want to sing, and when I want to sing, give me Jesus.”

5. **Growing Forward---What is Next?** John seems to reflect on the church in his time seeking direction.

Some may find the call of Christ too difficult. Hard to follow in times which seem challenging, where fear and doubt, anxiety and curiosity are found in a time of change.

The words seem difficult---“Then many of Jesus’ own disciples who heard him said, ‘This is a very hard message to take. Who can really listen to it?’”

Jesus teaches again, most directly, that it is not about them, the way of Christ is not first and foremost about our plans, our vision, it is about Jesus and coming into His life by receiving the Father with Spirit and Life! Just receive, believe, or like Thomas, hear the words after the Resurrection, "Blessed are you who have not seen and yet have come believe."

We are a congregation, in Christ. We are a people forgiven and set free in the world to share Jesus and His ways; God's love focused for us who confess the Mystery of our Faith that "Christ has Died! Christ is Risen! Christ will Come Again."

But, in the meantime, this time, it is as if Jesus is saying, "Do you want to go away too?" And with Peter (often bold but once a denier), we say,

"Lord, to whom shall we go?  
You have the words of deep, lasting Life,  
and we have come to believe and so to know  
That you are the Holy One of Israel."

Growing Forward together. Focusing on the Future is the way of the church that is faithful in stewardship and growing ever more deeply into Christ.

Over these weeks, I hope that John 6 has gotten through to you with a sense of wonder that God has cared enough to send the very best; and that with God's sending of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit--the way of love will prevail with the growing of the Light in the face of every darkness.

We are called to be at the feet of Jesus, to listen and learn. Then, to be the feet of Jesus in the world.

Today, God meets us in the Word, at the Table, through the forgiving waters of the Font. Here is the place is our Center. Here today, Jesus, the Bread of Life, would feed us and that we hunger and thirst NO MORE.

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

May our love, our joy, our hope be that kind of shalom, peace that is the sweet smell of Christ and that, in one whiff of it, all will know that we have been with Jesus.