



Pentecost 2

June 18, 2017 – 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

Theme: Jesus Is “the Bread of Life”

Sermon Text: John 6:25-35 (NIV)

²⁵ When they [some of the crowd He'd fed with the 5 loaves and 2 fish] found [Jesus] on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

²⁸ Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

³⁰ So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

³² Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

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Page 1 of 4



“You are what you eat.” The origin of this phrase comes to us thru a somewhat tortuous route. The actual phrase didn't emerge in English until the 1920s & 30s, and the earliest known printed example is from an ad for beef in a 1923 edition of the *Bridgeport Telegraph*, for 'United Meet [sic] Markets: “90% of the diseases known to man are caused by cheap foodstuffs. You are what you eat.” In 1942, Victor Lindlahr published *You Are What You Eat: How to Win and Keep Health with Diet*. That seems to be the vehicle that took the phrase into the public arena. The phrase got a new lease of life in the 1960s hippy era. The food of choice of the champions of this notion was macrobiotic wholefood and the phrase was adopted by them as a slogan for healthy eating. **“You are what you eat.”**

But I believe the gist of the phrase stems from the words of Jesus in John 6 and that it's fundamental meaning is spiritual, not physical. In answer to the misguided material desires of a group of individuals who sought Him only because they were among the multitudes that Jesus had fed the day before by multiplying five loaves of bread and two small fish, He tells His listeners, and us:

I AM “THE BREAD OF LIFE”

We read that **“When”** some of the crowd He'd fed with those 5 loaves and 2 fish **“found”** Jesus **“on the other side of the lake, they asked him, ‘Rabbi, when did you get here?’ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.’”** Ever take a swig of milk and practically gag because it's sour? You look at the expiration date on the carton and discover that it was two weeks earlier! Yuk! Well the things of this world and life itself have expiration dates, too. I'd imagine that one of the saddest moments in a person's life may be in facing old age and knowing deep down inside that his or her life has been invested in passing things—that is, in **“food that spoils”** and is seasoned with regret.

We work hard, spend much time and money and agonize over decisions that may only help us for a few decades at most. We all have legitimate responsibilities in this life that keep us occupied, yet we too easily become absorbed in the here and now. All the while, we squander opportunities to invest in eternal treasures. Other than God, Scripture mentions only two things that will last forever: the souls of human beings, and **“the living and enduring word of God”** (1 Peter 1:23). These are the two areas where Jesus calls us to involve ourselves. No genuine investment in them will spoil. They're **“food that endures to eternal life.”** Once a month, we should take stock of our lives. How do we spend our time, money and energy? What do we think about when we go to bed and when we wake up? When we face our later years, what will we see of our lives that will last eternally? When the world itself passes away, what of our work will remain? Answering questions like these help us keep our lives on track and God's priorities in the fore.

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Page 2 of 4



Jesus gives us very clear advice in approaching such questions. “Do not work for food that spoils,” He says. He wants us to live with an eternal perspective. We were created to “bear fruit . . . that will last” (John 15:16).

When we invest ourselves in anything else, we fall short of our highest purpose. One of the saddest scenes in all humanity is people who’ve tried, and failed, to fill their internal void with riches, relationships, beauty, power and prestige that offer momentary joy. But ultimately, they’ll never satisfy a person very long. In the end, they vanish like the morning mist. Only the “food” that Jesus provides lasts forever. And while society scorns it as worthless fodder, Jesus says it’s of infinite worth. It’s unimpressive to the material mind, but in the end it’ll be seen by all for what it is. Believer and unbeliever will gaze at God’s gift of salvation and say, “That’s what my heart really desired all along”—one with unbridled joy, the other, with bitter regret.

The miraculous meal that the multitudes were blessed to enjoy along the shore of the Sea of Galilee the day before wouldn’t curb their physical hunger for long. Even a summer barbecue with all the fixings only keeps one’s hunger at bay for a few hours at most. Jesus wants us to focus our hearts of faith on the Giver, not the gifts. Missing His point altogether, though, the crowd “asked Him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’” Their question seems sincere enough. We may have asked ourselves the same question a time or two. “What does the Lord want from me?” we wonder. “Why am I so powerless when it comes to doing God’s will?” “Why do I continue to succumb to the same temptations over and over again?” Our prayers often lack effect. We’re beaten and bruised by sins and attitudes that we can’t overcome and battered by circumstances that seem to confine us. We know, beyond the shadow of a doubt sometimes, that we’re not living the Christian life that God wants us to live. Far from it, in fact. How come?

Because most of us are way, way too stubborn to let go and let God. We fool ourselves into thinking that we can stand all alone against the devil’s onslaughts. Or, we really don’t want to give up the “pet sins” we’ve grown so accustomed to that they’re almost like a second skin. If we habitually succumb to the same temptation, we may reach a point where we don’t feel like we’re ever going to conquer it. It’s our “go-to” escape; the default defense mechanism we employ in order to avoid becoming emotionally invested in a situation or relationship that might require us to be actively engaged beyond our comfort level. We retreat from real-life problems, decisions and stresses and dive headlong into a fantasy-land where we set the parameters for our conduct; a make-believe world where we make the rules and determine the outcomes. We muddle through life with one foot in the real world, and one foot in never-never land. Our faith vacillates from hot to cold, and it becomes next to impossible for those who rely on us to know for sure whether or not we’ll fulfill our obligations, carry out our responsibilities or follow through on our commitments. And that makes life miserable for everyone.

Sometimes we let the clouds of future fears obscure today’s blessings. Or, we allow the guilt and shame of our past to cast a pall over our present, rendering us ineffective to serve

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Page 3 of 4



the Lord in the stations of life He's placed us in. Whenever we travel in our mind to a "happy place" in order to escape from reality or let future fears or past mistakes paralyze us, we're not living up to our God-given potentials. Instead, we're playing on Satan's team.

If the Apostle Paul was here this morning, he'd likely tell us what he told the Christians in Rome: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2). God urges us to put His Word to the test! He wants us to jump into our day with our feet of faith planted squarely on the path of His righteousness and trusting in His rock-solid gospel promises. And He wants us to navigate life's maze using the compass of His commandments as our guide for godly living.

We expend tons of energy traversing the treacherous terrain of this fallen world. Like a convoy of Humvees creeping through ISIS territory in Syria, we need to keep our senses on high alert for any threat our spiritual enemies pose. The Bible says God doesn't "slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). And that's good news! But guess what? Satan doesn't either! And that's bad news. But if we feast on "the bread of life"—if we regularly nourish our faith in Jesus by studying His Word and penitently approach His Supper trusting that together with the bread and wine we also receive His true body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins, then we'll have the Spirit's power to respond to the Apostle Peter's appeal in his 1st epistle, where he urges believers of every generation: "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (5:8-9).

In His "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus promises: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6). In our sermon text, He tells us why that's the case. We will be filled with *Him*. *He* is our righteousness! Jesus is the object of everything for which we truly hunger and thirst. He is the Manna the Father sent; the "bread of life" who alone satisfies the inner longings of our souls. When we "hunger and thirst for" His "righteousness"; when we "come to" Him for the strength to persevere in faith; when we "believe" in Him as our only Savior from sin, then He promises us that we "will never go hungry" and "never be thirsty" again! "**You are what you eat.**" So, feast on Jesus, "the Bread of Life"! Let Him satisfy your every godly desire! Amen.

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Page 4 of 4