

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**The Bread of Life (2)  
Proper 14  
John 6:48-59**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

In your wisdom, O God, you call us here to worship you.

**We gather, alive to the Word of God.**

You call us to be fully alive with your life abundant,  
ready to listen and respond with heart, soul, strength, and mind.

**We listen, alive to the Word of God.**

You call us to be always watchful for your Word of wisdom,  
sometimes startling and unexpected,  
sometimes still and quiet,  
but always dwelling among us.

**We watch and wait for the Word of God.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Almighty God,  
you sent your Holy Spirit  
to be the life and light of your church.  
Open our hearts to the riches of your grace,  
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit  
in love, joy, and peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Children's Hymn**

**Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
Let us make our confession to God.

**Prayer of Confession**

Merciful God,  
in your gracious presence  
we confess our sin and the sin of this world.  
Although Christ is among us as our peace,  
we are a people divided against ourselves  
as we cling to the values of a broken world.  
The profit and pleasures we pursue  
lay waste the land and pollute the seas.  
The fears and jealousies that we harbor  
set neighbor against neighbor  
and nation against nation.  
We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom,  
of intellect and reason,  
and turn them into bonds of oppression.  
Lord, have mercy upon us;  
heal and forgive us.  
Set us free to serve you in the world  
as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news!  
Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.  
Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
Know that in Jesus,  
God embraces you, forgives you,  
and strengthens you to live a renewed life.  
Thanks be to God.

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.

**Hymn #571: "Lord I want to Be a Christian" (V 1,2,4)**

Lord, I want to be a Christian  
 ina my heart, ina my heart;  
 Lord, I want to be a Christian ina my heart.  
 Ina my heart, ina my heart,  
 Lord, I want to be a Christian ina my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving  
 ina my heart, ina my heart;  
 Lord, I want to be more loving ina my heart.  
 Ina my heart, ina my heart,  
 Lord, I want to be more loving ina my heart.

Lord, I want to be like Jesus  
 ina my heart, ina my heart;  
 Lord, I want to be like Jesus ina my heart.  
 Ina my heart, ina my heart,  
 Lord, I want to be like Jesus ina my heart.

**Responsive Reading****Psalm 146**

Praise the LORD!  
 Praise the LORD, O my soul!  
**<sup>2</sup> I will praise the LORD as long as I live;  
 I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.**

<sup>3</sup> Put not your trust in princes,  
 in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.  
**<sup>4</sup> When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;  
 on that very day, his plans perish.**

<sup>5</sup> Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,  
 whose hope is in the LORD his God,  
**<sup>6</sup> who made heaven and earth,  
 the sea, and all that is in them,  
 who keeps faith forever;**

<sup>7</sup> who executes justice for the oppressed,  
 who gives food to the hungry.  
 The LORD sets the prisoners free;  
**<sup>8</sup> the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.  
 The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;  
 the LORD loves the righteous.**

<sup>9</sup> The LORD watches over the sojourners;  
 he upholds the widow and the fatherless,  
 but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.  
<sup>10</sup> **The LORD will reign forever,  
 your God, O Zion, to all generations.  
 Praise the LORD!**

**Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Scripture**

**John 6:48-59**

<sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> 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.”

<sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” <sup>59</sup> Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

**Sermon**

One of the most interesting surveys you can dig into are the surveys based around happiness and satisfaction with life. What makes it so interesting is the multitude of questions that are asked and the ways in which that data is analyzed by different organizations based upon what it is they are trying to prove. Organizations, especially governmental organizations, often just change the questions if they do not get the results they desire.

However, when you look at all of the data compiled together in a single source, using all of the different questions and methods you discover something interesting. Most people are unsatisfied with their lives. More than 70% of people worldwide, regardless of what their social

media might portray, are actually not feeling fulfilled in their day-to-day life, in fact they stated that their life often felt meaningless and without purpose.

What makes this more interesting is the fact that the result was pretty much the same regardless of a person's financial status. Just as many executives were dissatisfied with their lives as blue-collar workers. In fact, what is even more surprising is the results were almost the same between atheists and people of all religions.

Truthfully, people often feel that they are missing something in their lives, this is perhaps what has caused the rise of therapy in the modern world. People feel that they are missing something essential to life, something to meet their need for purpose in their lives, to improve their quality of life and help them find peace and happiness. However, so many struggle to find that something.

You can find hundreds upon hundreds of message boards on the internet where people discuss their dissatisfaction with life, the emptiness that they feel and seek out the advice of others, looking for changes that they can make in their lives to feel more satisfied with their lives. There are blogs that are dedicated to offering life advice, Ted talks, expensive courses, and self-help books that all tell you how you should change your life to feel more satisfied. Most of them claiming to be simple and foolproof ten steps to a happier life, yet we all know if they really worked, the world would be a vastly different place.

Abraham Maslow, a psychologist, studied how people described life satisfaction and developed his pyramid of human needs, it built a basic hierarchy of what people needed to feel satisfied in life, and is still considered a basis of many programs designed to help people improve their lives today. In his analysis Maslow claimed that if the most basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid cannot be met, the needs that are higher up in the pyramid cannot motivate people to live better lives.

At the base of his pyramid are the most basic of human needs, food, air, water, shelter, warmth, and sleep. These are things which are all essential to our survival. If you cannot breathe you will not be motivated to seek out a better job. If you have nothing to eat or drink, or no roof over your head, you do not really care about the concert that is happening in town, or the new movie that just came out.

Maslow claimed that a person's basic physiological needs, need to be met before they begin to give thought to secondary needs like safety, love and belonging.

In fact, he said it this way,

“It is quite true that man lives by bread alone—when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled?”

“At once other (and “higher”) needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still “higher”) needs emerge and so on.”

Well God’s Word disagrees with Maslow on one point.

**Deuteronomy 8:3**

**<sup>3</sup> And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.**

Do you remember the time that Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. He fasted for forty days, if anyone here has fasted for just a few days you can begin to understand the weakness and hunger he felt at that time. Satan looks at Jesus and suggests that he turns some stone into bread.

**Matthew 4:2-4**

**<sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written,  
     “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone,  
     but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”**

Even in his weakened and starving state, he clung to the Word of God, quoting the book of Deuteronomy to Satan.

The word of God is the bread life for the faithful and this is what Jesus offered to all of the crowds who were following him everywhere.

However, the crowds were seeking him out for their own reasons and their own needs, many which would fall on Maslow’s pyramid. They were seeking him out for food, healing and maybe even entertainment as they witnessed the miracles he performed in their presence.

If you were here last week, you should recall the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand and how he told them that they were following him for the wrong reasons, seeking to have their bellies filled instead of their hearts with the Word of God.

**John 6: 25-27**

**<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are**

**seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.  
<sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life,  
 which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal**

Jesus disagrees with Maslow and modern psychology; he makes a very important change to the hierarchy. Jesus is teaching his followers that the most basic need we have in this life is not physical or psychological, instead our spiritual need is the most basic and important need we have in this world. Air, bread, and water will indeed keep us alive for a limited time, we all know that life is not forever with just our physical needs met, our deeper and more important need is for the 'food that endures to eternal life,' God!

Many people are looking to meet that most basic spiritual need through things like yoga, meditation, a religion, or mindset that they want to adopt and allows them to meet the rest of their needs in the way that they choose. Many of these people will claim that all religions lead to heaven, and that no religion is better than the other ones. However, Jesus would disagree he speaks very clearly.

**John 6: 51**

**<sup>51</sup> 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."**

Jesus does not speak about yoga, meditation, other religions, or spirituality. He is very direct and exclusive. There is only one way to eternal life, there are no alternatives, no other options. He, and he alone, is the bread that God gives, and it is only by receiving the bread from heaven that we can enter into God's kingdom of heaven and eternal life.

Living a good life, filled with love and charity is a wonderful thing, and I wish more people would choose to live that way, but that alone does not gain entry into God's eternal kingdom. Only Jesus can grant that.

In fact, it is only by eating the bread of life that we will live forever. It is not enough to know that bread is bread, it is not enough to have bread in our house or in our life, unless we actually eat the bread it will do us no good.

It is not enough to acknowledge that Jesus lived and died for the sins of the human race. It is not enough for us to just look at Jesus, admire him as a good man, listen to him, believe in him, sing about him, talk about him. We need to eat of him, to take all that he teaches and ingest it, make it part of our being, receive him in faith and let him enter into our hearts, changing who we are into who he calls us to be.

It sounds strange this idea of eating Jesus, but the Bible makes it clear that it is more than just knowing God in our lives.

In the book of Acts, just after the day of Pentecost, Peter preaches to the crowds.

**Acts 2:37-40**

**<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."**

We are called to eat the body of the Lord, by repentance and being baptized.

This is why we do not have eternal life in the first place. Mankind sinned against God, in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve ate the fruit because of Satan's deception and death was brought into the world. Mankind had walked away from God, and the Bible teaches us that we only truly have life when we are in relationship with God.

When we are living in this world without God, we are physically alive, but spiritually dead. When we truly repent from our sin and stop rejecting the entirety of God's work in our lives, our relationship with God is restored. We are reconciled with the Lord; this is what Jesus did for the faithful when he sacrificed himself upon the cross for our sins. He died so we could become a new creation and as a seal of that salvation God sends us the Holy Spirit. This is what we celebrate and affirm in the Sacrament of Baptism, that the Spirit of God lives within us. We have internalized him into our lives, into our very existence, the same way in which we internalize the food we eat.

In the Scripture we are looking at today, Jesus explains the Sacrament of Communion.

**John 6: 56-57**

**<sup>56</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.**

This is an allusion to the Passover celebration, something that Christians celebrate as Easter. The Passover festival was given to the Jews when they fled Egypt under the leadership of Moses. God through Moses told Egypt over and over to let his people go, following each request with a plague when Egypt refused. In the last plague, God sent an Angel of Death to Egypt to take the firstborn. The people of Israel were told to sacrifice a lamb and spread its blood on the doorposts of their houses so the Angel of Death would pass over their homes.

In the Gospel of John, we learn that Jesus is our Passover lamb, sacrificed to save us from the death we deserve because of our sinful nature. It is his blood that was shed upon the cross that liberates us from the slavery of sin, it is his death that saves us from eternal death.



Eating the flesh of Jesus, symbolic as it may be, is a reminder for all of us of the Passover meal. The first time in Egypt it was in preparation for a journey onto freedom, and ever since the Jews have celebrated it as a reminder of God and his promises.

However, when Jesus speaks of drinking his blood the analogy of the Passover meal falls apart. Instead, we find a conflict with a command that is repeated often in both the Old and New Testament, that strictly forbids the drinking of blood or eating of meat which still has blood in it.

**Deuteronomy 12:23**

**<sup>23</sup> Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.**

And this idea is repeated in the book of Acts:

**Acts 15:28-29**

**<sup>28</sup> For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: <sup>29</sup> that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”**

The reason that the drinking of blood was so strictly forbidden is that the blood contained the life of the creature. Which is why Jesus’s commandment to drink his blood is so contradictory to other teaching. In giving us this command he is doing two things; by eating the flesh of Christ in the bread we are sharing in his death upon the cross; in the drinking of the wine, we are drinking the blood of Christ and sharing in his life and resurrection.

In 1 Corinthians Paul writes:

**1 Corinthians 10:16**

**<sup>16</sup> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?**

In the Gospel, Jesus invites us to receive him into our lives. In Holy Baptism, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, the living Spirit of God. In Holy Communion, we affirm this gift of the Holy Spirit and receive Christ himself in, with, and under the bread and wine.

The human body is a wonderful creation. We have an incredible feedback system built in that warns us of our needs and dangers. Pain is a feeling that often saves our lives; it warns us to do what is necessary to reduce the pain. Hunger warns us to eat because we are running out of the fuel we need to continue on in this world.

Spiritually all humans have a similar feedback system. When people live apart from God, they sense a spiritual hunger, an emptiness in their lives. When they rebel against God and do things

which go against Biblical teachings, they often begin to feel guilt and shame, their conscience makes them question their behavior. Of course, many people choose to ignore those feelings, they find people, places and organizations that affirm the sin they are taking pleasure in, or they change the Word of God to try to find comfort in their sin that way.

These methods work for a time, and for some people they will endure their entire lives without ever discovering the truth of their need for God. However, the truth is that every human being is born with a spiritual hunger, it is part of us all.

The prophet Amos told us all that there will come a time when finding the truth of God's Word will be exceedingly difficult in this world.

**Amos 8:11-12**

**“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God,  
 “when I will send a famine on the land—  
 not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,  
 but of hearing the words of the Lord.  
<sup>12</sup> They shall wander from sea to sea,  
 and from north to east;  
 they shall run to and for, to seek the word of the Lord,  
 but they shall not find it.**

We are living in a time where the Gospel is hidden, corrupted by false teachers who speak half truths in an effort to gain for themselves. We live in an age where those who are seeking out the truth of God's Word are being confused by all of the options available to them, being told that any religion leads to heaven, and that all you need is love.

This is why it is so important for us to eat the bread of life, so that we know the truth of God's Word, and repent and turn away from the ways of this world to the one and only way into eternal life, Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is also why it is vital that we share that truth with others. There are so many people around us who are hungry for the bread of life but have not found it, sometimes even our friends and family. We need to be willing to share the whole truth of God's Word with others, by loving them in the way that Jesus taught us. Loving them as we love ourselves, loving them with their sins intact, the same way God loved us before we came to him and repented and began to change our lives. By loving them and praying for them to find Jesus Christ.

I hope and pray that each of us would be filled with the Love of Christ and that the Holy Spirit would grant us the wisdom and courage we need to share the Gospel, the bread of life, with those who hunger and thirst for a spiritual answer as we walk as the Salt and Light of God's Word in this broken and fallen world.

Let us pray,

**May Your Grace Move Our Love**

O sweet Savior Christ,  
 in your undeserved love for us  
 you were prepared to suffer the painful death of the cross:  
 let me not be cold or even lukewarm in my love for you.

Lord help me to face the truth about myself.  
 Help me to hear my words as others hear them,  
 to see my face as others see me;  
 Let me be honest enough to recognize my impatience and conceit;

Let me recognize my anger and selfishness;  
 Give me sufficient humility to accept my own weakness for what they are.  
 Give me the grace – at least in your presence – to say. ‘I was wrong – forgive me.’

God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 increase in us faith and truth and gentleness  
 and grant us part and lot among the saints.

***Source: Polycarp***

**Hymn: “Grace”**

Your grace that leads this sinner home from death to life forever,  
 And sings the song of righteousness by blood and not by merit.

Your grace that reaches far and wide to every tribe and nation,  
 Has called my heart to enter in the joy of Your salvation.

**CHORUS**

By grace I am redeemed by grace I am restored,  
 And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

Your grace that I cannot explain not by my earthly wisdom,  
 The Prince of life without a stain was traded for this sinner. (Chorus)

Let praise rise up and overflow my song resound forever,  
 For grace will see me welcomed home to walk beside my Saviour. (Chorus)

**Invitation to Offering****Offertory Prayer**  
**(Congregant Prepared)****Closing Hymn #471: “We Are One in The Spirit” (V 1,3,4)**

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,  
 we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,  
 and we pray that all unity will one day be restored,  
 and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
 and they'll know we are Christians by our love.  
 We will work with each other, we will work side by side,  
 We will work with each other, we will work side by side,  
 and we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride,  
 and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
 and they'll know we are Christians by our love.

All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,  
 and all praise to Christ Jesus, who is God's only Son,  
 and all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one,  
 and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
 and they'll know we are Christians by our love.

**Pastoral Prayer**

Mighty God,  
 we give you thanks for life and breath to follow you all our days.  
 Thank you for the gift of faith that gives us courage when things are difficult,  
 and for the encouragement we find in the faith of others we meet.  
 Inspire us to remain loyal to you as our true Source of life and hope.

We thank you for guiding us when we cannot see the path ahead.  
 Thank you for showing us a way through our challenges  
 when we cannot see a solution on our own  
 Renew our trust in you in these days when so much is confusing and uncertain.

We pray for those who wonder if they can rely on you,  
 and for those who are afraid for the future.  
 Give them courage to listen for your call and follow your leading.

We pray for those who doubt.  
 Give them courage to explore those doubts and questions

and so discover renewed trust in your promises.

We pray for those who are impatient.  
Bless them in times of waiting for what comes next  
and fill them with kindness.

We pray for those who have chosen a path that has led to trouble.  
Turn their hearts towards you  
and lead them in ways of goodness, justice, and generosity.

We pray for your Church in these days when so much is changing.  
Give us wisdom to discern ways to reach out to our community,  
and faithfulness to keep following Jesus into the future you hold in your hands.

All knowing Father, we depend on you.  
Be gracious and bless us, so that our lives may be a blessing to others.  
Together we pray in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Our lord and savior,  
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
As the one true God,  
Now and forevermore. **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

May the grace of God,  
freely given through Christ, our Lord,  
and sufficient for all our needs,  
and may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
who testifies with our spirit  
that we are God's children,  
guide and sustain us this day  
and forever. **Amen.**