

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, August 4th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Bread of Life
Proper 13
John 6:22-29

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

All who thirst, come to the water.
Come, all who are weary;
come, all who yearn for forgiveness.
The Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ has washed over us,
and our gracious and holy God beckons and blesses us.
Drink deeply of these living waters.
Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God, you are infinite,
eternal and unchangeable,
glorious in holiness,
full of love and compassion,
abundant in grace and truth.
Your works everywhere praise you,
and your glory is revealed
in Jesus Christ our Savior.
Therefore we praise you,
blessed and holy Trinity,
one God, forever and ever.
Amen.

Children's Hymn

Call to Confession

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

Prayer of Confession

Eternal God,
 in whom we live and move and have our being,
 whose face is hidden from us by our sins,
 and whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts:
 Cleanse us from all our offenses,
 and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires,
 that with reverent and humble hearts
 we may draw near to you,
 confessing our faults,
 confiding in your grace,
 and finding in you our refuge and our strength;
 through Jesus Christ your Son

Assurance of Pardon

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
 Your sins are pardoned.
 The penalty is paid.
 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 #350: "To God Be the Glory"

To God be the glory, who great things has done;
 God so loved the world! Freely sending the Son,
 Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
 And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Refrain

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
 Let the earth hear God's voice!
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
 Let the people rejoice!
 O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
 And give God the glory, who great things has done.

Oh perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
 To every believer the promise of God;
 That when the offender, repenting, believes,
 Through Jesus' atonement, full pardon receives! (Refrain)

Great things God has taught us, great things God has done,
 And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
 But purer, and higher, and greater will be
 Our wonder, our gladness, when Jesus we see! (Refrain)

Responsive Reading

Isaiah 55:2-5

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;
 for the LORD has spoken:

"Children have I reared and brought up,
 but they have rebelled against me.

**3 The ox knows its owner,
 and the donkey its master's crib,
 but Israel does not know,
 my people do not understand."**

4 Ah, sinful nation,
 a people laden with iniquity,
 offspring of evildoers,
 children who deal corruptly!
 They have forsaken the LORD,
 they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
 they are utterly estranged.

**5 Why will you still be struck down?
 Why will you continue to rebel?
 The whole head is sick,
 and the whole heart faint.**

Prayer for illumination **(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

John 6:22-29

²² On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

²³ Other boats from Tiberius came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

²⁴ So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” ²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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.”

²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Sermon

Most of man’s life is spent trying to fill his needs. It is true that we are all born with needs. We do not have everything we need to survive in this world. It takes time and effort to carry out and succeed in life, but the truth is that we have both physical and material needs as well as spiritual needs. Yet, we spend most of our time in this world chasing those physical needs things like food, a roof over our heads, and money to buy the things we need. However, we do spend some time seeking out those things that we need spiritually like love, peace, and joy. Then there are those who are fortunate enough to discover their need for God and they spend time seeking out him in this world.

The Scripture that we’re looking at today in the book of John is only eight verses long but within these eight verses, there are four truths about the physical and spiritual needs of man.

This all takes place the day after Jesus has fed the 5000 and then gone up the mountain to get away from the crowds that were seeking to make him a king. He had sent his disciples to their boat, the only boat to cross the sea, Jesus had walked upon the water to get to the other side, calmly in the midst of a giant storm, and then suddenly they were safely in Capernaum.

John 6:22-25

22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “

This is the first truth, man has needs, he hungers for things. On the other side of the Sea of Galilee the crowd had been miraculously fed. There was a common belief in that day that when the Messiah came, he would feed them with mana from heaven in the same way that Moses had done in his day. In fact, the Jews of the time believed that the Messiah would give them even more than Moses had given, and that is exactly what Jesus had done when he fed them with fish and bread to their fill. This served to convince those who were gathered there that he was their Messiah and drove their desire to make Jesus their king.

So, the people acknowledged their need for a Messiah, their need for a savior was not an issue.

John 6:14-15

¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

After they had eaten their fill, they once again decide to listen to their new Messiah, that is when they notice his absence from among them. They knew that there had only been one boat along the shore and the disciples had taken it. So, they must have thought that he was simply somewhere else nearby or gone to seek some solitude and they set off in search of him.

They finally realize that he is not with them along that shoreline the next day, and the next lesson comes in the Scripture. Those who had been there along listening to the words of Jesus had been spiritually and physically. They had been filled, and when the hunger came again, physically and spiritually, they knew they needed to be filled again. They had a need, and they wanted that need met in their lives. They had heard Jesus say that he could meet their needs, and for that reason, their need, they looked for him, yet he was gone

And that is the second truth we discover in the Scriptures today. We all have needs, and those needs will go unmet unless we have a way to meet them. For physical needs like hunger, it is food, we eat, and the hunger is satisfied, for a time. Yet it is also true that all humans have a spiritual need that must be met in some way, so how are people to meet their spiritual needs, for Christians it is by doing what these people did, seeking out Jesus, wherever he may be to fulfill their needs.

So, they look for Jesus, hoping that he will once again fulfill their needs. They knew that other boats had arrived throughout the night, likely seeking refuge from the storm

which had occurred. So many of the people get on the boats and begin to search the shorelines for Jesus, eventually ending up in Capernaum.

The fact that the people had to go seek Jesus is an important point for all of us. Man has physical and spiritual needs. Man needs a Messiah, we all need a Saviour, and we all will be forced to admit that truth at some point in our lives, usually as death approaches. It is then that we begin to seek a way to fulfill our spiritual needs, some seek to find just enough comfort to trick themselves into living life the way that they wish, others try to force the spiritual needs into a corner of their life and just ignore it.

However, there is only One True Living God and one way into eternal life and that is Jesus Christ. So, to have spiritual needs truly met in a person's life, they must seek Jesus Christ out, personally. They need to be willing to search for him where they think he is, where they think he should be and even be willing to get in the boat and cross the sea, if that is what it takes to find him in their lives.

Most people in the modern world discover their spiritual need, but they are unwilling to seek Jesus, instead they make excuses for themselves. They ask themselves and others things like:

- **If Jesus is really the Messiah, why does he so often seem absent or far away in my life, especially when I am experiencing troubles?**
- **If there is a God and Jesus really is his son, why is there so much pain and suffering in this world?**
- **Why doesn't God just fix it all and make all the bad, all the pain, all of the suffering and all of the evil go away?**
- **Why doesn't God just meet all my needs immediately?**

The answer to many of these questions lies in the Scripture we are looking at today. As Christians we are called out to seek God in our lives at all times, especially as we navigate the daily challenges we face in this world.

The third truth we get in today's Scripture is that mankind's motive for seeking out the Messiah – in seeking a way to fulfil their needs in this world – is often corrupt.

What do I mean by that? Look at the reason why these people were seeking Jesus, they wanted their needs met again, the food he had provided them had left their system and they wanted a refill. And this is a tragic truth, that has been a fact in the lives of many throughout the ages and is still a tragic truth that exists in the world today.

People seek Jesus out in this world, not to praise him as our Lord and Saviour, not to serve him however we are called to in this world, but instead they seek Jesus because of what they think they can get out of him.

Man is primarily interested in having his own needs met. Man is primarily interested in himself, not in honoring Jesus as his Lord, not in humbly serving God in this world, not in acknowledging his sin, and repentance and turning away from his sinful ways. This is why there are so many people who call themselves Christians, in followers of Christ, yet they fail to read his Word, the Bible, they refuse to acknowledge the truths in the Scripture and instead seek to manipulate or ignore its teachings, because they are focused on their needs being met, their need to enjoy their sin and to trick themselves into believing they have salvation.

The thoughts of the crowd that sought out Jesus all along the shores and into Capernaum were focused not on humbly serving the Messiah, but on having their bellies filled once again, their needs fulfilled. Just like so many false Christians, they were focused on worldly needs and worldly things, on the flesh and fulfilling its desires.

This is not what God wants from us, instead we are meant to be interested in Jesus for who he is, the son of God, our Saviour. We should not be seeking what we can get out of him, but instead seeking what we can give up in service to him. We should love and serve God because of who he is not because of what we get out of the relationship. Christianity is not a tool to be used for personal gain, how I wish that message would echo from the pulpits of minsters all around the world.

The crowd should have recognized the miracle that had been performed among them, the feeding of more than 5000 people with just a couple small fishes and biscuits. They should have known it was only God, only the Messiah that could perform such a miracle and they should have fell upon their knees in praise, in worship, humbling themselves before him and giving themselves over in service to him.

They should have been asking what they could give, not what they could get.

Which is what Jesus reminds them.

John 6: 26-27

²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Jesus is making a point. Man, constantly seeks out the things that spoil. Man seeks to feed himself physically and spiritually with the things of this world. How many people

seek to fill that empty spiritual void in their lives, with feelings of comfort, pleasure, plenty. How many seek to fill it by attaining power, wealth, fame chasing the things of this world that their flesh enjoys. This is why we have so many people addicted to things in this world, because they are chasing the things which spoil.

What is ironic is that we all know that this is foolish, even those who have attained great amounts of worldly power, wealth and fame. As death looms ahead they all know that the thing of this world does not matter, because eventually we will not be part of this world. Everyone dies, and no one gets to determine the date and time, it could come early in our lives, or it could come after many long years, but it always comes.

And here is where we discover that even though the things of this world may give a temporary feeling of pleasure and being full, they are temporary. Eventually that emptiness returns and people are left incomplete, unfulfilled, hungry, dissatisfied, in need and they begin to chase more and more. When they are chasing worldly things, this usually leads to addiction, just look at the plague of addiction we have in the world today, everything from social media to porn and hardcore drugs, people are throwing their lives away chasing something that gives them a temporary feeling of peace.

Then as death comes close in their lives, they become depressed because they recognize the truth, their worldly pleasure was just that worldly, and will bring no comfort in the face of the end of their lives.

So, the third lesson we should take from the Scripture is that when we hunger and seek to fill those needs in our life it should be with the things that endure, not the things that spoil and perish.

Man's basic hunger is for life, a full life, an abundant life – a life that is complete, full of love, joy, peace and good things. Man seeks a life that lasts forever, that is why so many people seek so desperately to capture youth, and there is only one path to eternal life.

Jesus is the only way to eternal life; He is the only one who can give us things that do not perish. And in the final two verses of the Scripture we are looking at today Jesus tells us how we can find that eternal life.

We need to be willing to do the WORK of God. And what is that work, going to church every Sunday? Doing mission work? Teaching Sunday school?

The people who had found Jesus in Capernaum asked him what they need to do for eternal life. What works were important. Did you notice they used the plural, **“What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”**. Ironically, here we are almost 2000 years later, and we are still asking this same question. What works must we do?

So many people are focused on what they need to do to get what they want out of God. So many people are convincing themselves that if they live Good and moral lives by worldly standards that they will receive salvation.

There are good people in this world, people who do lots of good work, for society, for those in need. They live good and moral lives, sometimes even by Biblical standards, so we convince ourselves that they must be acceptable to God. After all how could they be condemned; they are good people.

There are also bad people in this world. People who do mostly bad works, who are focused on themselves and will do whatever it takes to get ahead in this world. They live immoral and unethical lives, so we convince ourselves that these people surely must be condemned by God, there is no way that God would grant eternal life to one of those people.

Then there is the group of go-betweeners. People who sometimes do good, even do good most of the time, yet there are times when they fall to bad, give into evil, do the immoral. They live lives that are both just and unjust. They are constantly weighing out their lives, thinking if I can just do a few more good works God will accept me. These people often compare themselves to the world around themselves and think, compared to this person I am not a good person, but compared to all these others, I am surely good enough for God's acceptance. These are the ones that convince themselves its okay to change God's Word and pick and choose what I want to obey, because as long as I do most of it God will surely let me into his Kingdom and have eternal life.

Well, this is exactly how those gathered around the Messiah were thinking when they asked Jesus, **"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"**.

Salvation is not a negotiation. It is not based on how good or bad your life is based on any worldly standard or any act of works. It does not matter how good your life was, or how evil it was! It does not matter what the world thinks of a person, or what a person thinks of themselves.

Jesus' answer is singular. Believe. **"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."** This is the one thing that is needed. Believe.

This goes much deeper than simply acknowledging that Jesus is God. Even Satan believes in God, the demons that Jesus casts out in the Scriptures all believed, all knew with 100% clarity that he was the Messiah, that he was the Son of God, yet not one of them will receive eternal salvation.

Believing means trusting in Him, entering into a personal relationship with him, seeking a life where we are not looking for what we get, but what we can give. It means that we do not focus on ourselves, but we focus on him, worshiping and praising him. It means

we examine our lives, acknowledge that we are sinners, and seek to repent and change the way we live, so we no longer hurt the one we love. It means we change for him, we do not change him for us, and that is a difficult thing to do, because it often means we need to give up some of those things we find pleasure in, but they are all going to spoil eventually and leave us unfulfilled, when we seek out the Lord, when we humbly serve him and let him fill us up, we know what it means to live life abundantly, full of love, joy and peace.

This is what Jesus tells them:

John 6:35

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

He is the bread of life, and our life eternal comes through him alone. Today as we celebrate communion let us remember that the things of this world which we find satisfaction in will all perish. Let us focus on the things that gives us eternal life, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and let us go forth and humbly serve him in this world, not because of what we receive, but because of who he is as we act as the Salt and Light of God's Word to the people around us.

Let us pray,

You Know Our Needs before We Ask

Almighty God,
 you know our needs before we ask,
 and our ignorance in asking:
 Set your servants free
 from all anxious thoughts about the future,
 give us contentment with your good gifts,
 and confirm our faith
 that as we seek your kingdom,
 you will not let us lack any good thing;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Source: Augustine of Hippo

Hymn #548: "Let Us Break Bread Together"

Let us break bread together on our knees;
 let us break bread together on our knees;
 when I fall down on my knees
 with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees;

let us drink wine together on our knees;
 when I fall down on my knees
 with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees;
 let us praise God together on our knees;
 when I fall down on my knees
 with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

Communion

Invitation to the Table

As we prepare to celebrate holy communion, let us remember that Scripture calls us to examine ourselves before God. We are taught that eating and drinking unworthily brings judgment upon ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28-29). Let us therefore ask God for the proper spirit in which to celebrate the sacrament.

Almighty God, before whom can be neither secret thought nor hidden deed, grant us your Spirit that we may know our hearts, our lives, and our inmost thoughts as you know them.

Grant us your grace that we may repent sincerely of all sin, find peace with you through our Lord Jesus Christ, and grow in assurance of salvation in him.

May the celebration of our Savior's infinite love in his redeeming death bring joy to us and glory to you.

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you;
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts;
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God;
It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Holy God, we praise you.
 Let the heavens be joyful,
 and the earth be glad.
 We bless you for creating the whole world,
 for your promises to your people Israel,
 and for Jesus Christ in whom your fullness dwells.

Born of Mary, he shares our life.
 Eating with sinners, he welcomes us.
 Guiding his children, he leads us.
 Visiting the sick, he heals us.
 Dying on the cross, he saves us.
 Risen from the dead, he gives new life.
 Living with you, he prays for us

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 Hosanna in the highest.
 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
 Hosanna in the highest.**

With thanksgiving we take this bread and this cup
 and proclaim the death and resurrection of our Lord.
 Receive our sacrifice of praise.
 Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us
 that this meal may be
 a communion in the body and blood of our Lord.
 Make us one with Christ
 and with all who share this feast.
 Unite us in faith,
 encourage us with hope,
 inspire us to love,
 that we may serve as your faithful disciples
 until we feast at your table in glory.
 We praise you, eternal God,
 through Christ your Word made flesh,
 in the holy and life-giving Spirit,
 now and forever.
Amen.

The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,**

**he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. AMEN.**

Communion

Congregation of Jesus Christ, the Lord has prepared his table for all who love him and trust in him alone for their salvation. All who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and who desire to live in obedience to him as Lord, are now invited to come with gladness to the table of the Lord.

Breaking of the bread

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread,
 and after giving thanks to God,
 he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take, eat.
 This is my body, given for you.
 Do this in remembrance of me.

Taking of the bread

Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins

Distribution of the cup

In the same way he took the cup, saying:
 This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
 shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
 Whenever you drink it,
 do this in remembrance of me.

Drinking of the cup

Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

Prayer after Communion

We thank you, O God,

that through Word and Sacrament
 you have given us your Son,
 who is the true bread from heaven
 and food of eternal life.
 So strengthen us in your service
 that our daily living may show our thanks,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Invitation to Offering

Offertory Prayer **(Congregant Prepared)**

Closing Hymn: "He is Lord"

He is Lord, He is Lord
 He is risen from the dead
 and He is Lord
 Every knee shall bow,
 every tongue confess
 That Jesus Christ is Lord!

Pastoral Prayer

O God, we give you thanks for your goodness
 in the changing times of our lives.
 For every occasion you have surprised us with a blessing,
 we give you thanks
 in the pressures of this present moment,
 we are grateful for the strength and courage we find,
 knowing you are right beside us.
 Give us wisdom and patience
 to face a future filled with many questions and challenges.
 Help us trust in your goodness
 even when we wrestle with what comes next.

Aware of our own needs and the great need around us,
 we remember Christ's compassion
 and offer our prayers for the world, seeking your guidance
 so that we may do our part to share comfort, healing, and hope.

We pray for those who are hungry or homeless in these challenging times,
 and all those feeling the stress of rising prices.

Give those with more resources the confidence to share generously.
We pray for those who have lost everything in wild fire or flooding this year,
and for growers facing drought, shortage of workers and uncertain markets.
Guide the leaders in our communities and our nation
as they face these complicated problems.
Give them wisdom and courage to work together
to make decisions for the wellbeing of the most vulnerable.

We pray for all who are sick or in pain, those waiting for diagnosis or treatment,
and all who face chronic health challenges.
Equip those who offer health care to manage the demands they face
to provide care in timely ways.
Bring healing in body, mind, and spirit to all who struggle.

We pray for those who offer hospitality to others this summer
in their homes and workplaces, in their churches and communities.
Keep us alert to the needs of visitors and strangers
and open our hearts so that your goodness will touch those we meet.

Lord Jesus Christ, you walk with us through all the days of challenge and celebration.
Draw near to all who face unexpected sorrow this summer
and join with those who celebrate happy occasions, too.
Be our Bread for the journey to sustain us and encourage us,
whatever the days ahead holds for us.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, as the One True Living God,
now and forever we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord be kind and gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace.