



## Sermon by Synod Minister Seyward Ask

August 4, 2024

---

### **John 6:24-35**

The Holy Gospel according to St John, the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter:

<sup>24</sup>So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.<sup>25</sup> When [the crowds] found Jesus on the other side of the lake, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’ <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for 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 for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.’ <sup>28</sup>Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’ <sup>30</sup>So they said to him, ‘What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?’ <sup>31</sup>Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” <sup>32</sup>Then Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ <sup>34</sup>They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

### **Sermon:**

Jesus is telling these crowds about a new type of bread, a bread that will fill you up not only for a day or even for a week, but forever. And the crowds responded to this by saying, “Sir, give us

this bread always.” Although the idea of some sort of eternally filling bread is what Jesus was offering, it seemed the crowds were willing to believe Jesus, eager to try this new special bread. But the way Jesus responded to their request to give them this bread was not really what they were thinking he would say.

You see, right before this scene takes place, the crowds had just recently witnessed one of Jesus’ miracles firsthand as he fed them, thousands of people, with nothing more than a few small loaves of bread and a couple of fish. Jesus left shortly after that, and the crowds had been searching for him ever since. Now that they found him, and he was talking about a special bread that would leave them never hungry again, they were probably expecting something more along the lines of what they had witnessed Jesus do for them before, or if not that, then something like the manna God provided for their ancestors in the wilderness -- in other words, they assumed Jesus was talking about a real, physical type of bread that would either fill them up forever or appear for them to eat throughout their lives.

So I’m sure you can imagine their surprise and confusion when Jesus responded to their request by saying, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

So these crowds, who were looking for Jesus to perform another miracle that they could immediately benefit from, instead were giving Jesus a blank stare and wondering what on earth he could possibly mean by saying that he himself was this bread of life.

What we don’t get to hear in this Gospel text is the crowd’s reaction. Their initial confusion eventually morphed into doubt and suspicion, and even a bit of anger. They even started to complain to one another about Jesus claiming to be the bread of life, saying, “Isn’t this Jesus, whose father and mother we know? Isn’t this just some regular guy, just like one of us? How can he now be telling us he is the bread of life?”

The thing is, while they were trying to make out Jesus to be just like them, they seemed to have conveniently forgotten all the miracles they had witnessed Jesus performing right before their eyes -- healing the sick, curing the blind and lame, feeding thousands of people with a meal meant for one young boy. Now that Jesus was claiming to be himself this eternally filling bread of life, and that anyone who believes in him will never hunger again, the crowds started having questions and doubts. Because even with the healings and the feeding of thousands, Jesus was still just too common for them. Surely something from God as amazing sounding as bread that would fill you up forever would be a little more special, a little more different, right?

But that's kind of the thing about God; our limited, human understanding naturally wants to put God into a box, into something we can relate to and understand and make sense of based on how we know and understand the world. But God doesn't acknowledge boundaries and is so much more, so much bigger than the constrictions of our box. And that is hard to grasp, I know that. The crowds were certainly having a hard time with it. Their understanding of the coming Messiah fit into a very specific and regulated box, and Jesus, this seemingly common, ordinary man from common, ordinary parents, even with his miracles, just didn't fit into that particular box.

That being said, and knowing that I myself have a limited understanding of who God really and truly is, I'm going to give my limited understanding of what exactly Jesus meant when he said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Right off the bat, I'm pretty certain Jesus wasn't talking about physical food and hunger. Or at least he wasn't only talking about physical food and hunger. Jesus is talking about all of our needs. And here of course I need to remind us all that there is a very real difference between needs and wants. Do I want a new Roomba vacuum that self-empties into a concealed bag so I never have to see how much cat hair it sucked up? Absolutely. Do I *need* one? Probably not. The takeaway here is that God provides for our needs.

Because of this, because we know God provides for our needs, we should be generous with what we do have and mindful of those who go without. In this world and culture that we live in of outstanding consumerism and greed, of plates filled with more food than many people eat in an entire day, we should also remember to be thankful, and grateful for the things we have been blessed with. And paired with that gratefulness comes a natural response of generosity. Why should we not give freely and generously, knowing that our God will provide for us? Everything we have belongs to God anyway, so it should be that much easier to share it with others.

And so I ask you to take a moment and remember these words from Jesus, because they are certainly not box-confining words: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” Thanks be to God. Amen.