B, Pentecost 12

Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Brookings, SD

Rev. Matthew Wurm

August 12th, 2018

Sermon Text: John 6:51

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. The sermon text for this morning is from John 6:51, *“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,”* thus for the text.

 Three times in our Gospel lesson for today, Jesus speaks about giving. In vs. 37, He says, “All that the Father gives me will come to me. In vs. 39, He says, “I should lose nothing of all that he has given me.” And in vs. 51, He states that the bread that He will give for the life of the world is His flesh.

Also, three times in this same lesson, Jesus speaks about the resurrection on the last day. In vs. 39, He says that He will raise up those whom the Father has given to Him. He echoes that reality again in vs. 40 and vs. 44. Jesus emphasizes the Father’s giving of the Son and the promise that on the last day, the Son will raise up those whom the Father has given Him. This text is about giving and raising up on the last day.

 Jesus makes His disciples do what they think is impossible and gives them bread and fish to feed five thousand men plus their families. Jesus gives His disciples trials as they makes them to struggle all night against the wind in the attempt to cross the Sea of Galilee and then He does the impossible – walks across the water. The crowds on the other side of the lake want Jesus to give them a sign that they might see and believe that God the Father and Jesus are one. So Jesus reminds them of something that the Father gave that should have been impossible – He gave manna, bread from heaven, to their forefathers with wilderness for forty years. It wasn’t Moses who gave them that bread from heaven. It was the Father who gave them that bread from heaven and now in Jesus, the Father is giving the impossible again.

This time He is giving them the true bread from heaven—Jesus who came down from heaven to give life to the world. They want to be given this bread. In fact they want it always. This is a good desire but they weren’t quite understanding that Jesus, in His flesh, was the impossible gift that the Father was giving. They were thinking in terms of just that which was possible to their minds. They weren’t thinking about Jesus giving them eternal life and the resurrection on the last day. They were just thinking about food, about bread.

Who doesn’t always want food? Who doesn’t always want a pantry well-stocked, a freezer chocked full, and a refrigerator brimming with fresh milk, fruits, and vegetables? Having all of that always would bring a person peace and joy, a life without worry. No need to work for food. More than you need would always be there. No need to worry about the weather, the seasons, the rain, the soil, the weeds, the raccoons eating your sweet corn, the rabbits, the deer, or any other pest or problem that could risk the security of your harvest. You would have food always and your life would be easy. Who wouldn’t want to be given that?!

 They want God to give this to them and they might be even willing to work a bit for it. But Jesus isn’t there to fill their pantries or to secure the success of their harvest. He is there to do His Father’s will. He is there as the bread that came down from heaven and He will give His flesh for the life of the world. The Israelite’s grumbled against Aaron and Moses in the wilderness and so too did they grumble against Jesus. *They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”* (Jn. 6:42). It doesn’t compute for them because they don’t believe that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God the Father. They don’t understand what it is that Jesus has come to give them even though He says it plainly, “*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.”* They were thinking that God could only give that which was possible in their own human minds and did not yet believe that nothing is impossible with God.

 I’m not so certain we always understand what Jesus has come to give either. Jesus is in the middle of a hard teaching here in John 6. Next week we will hear that after Jesus gave these followers this teaching about His bread, His flesh, His blood, His life, and the resurrection, many of them will no longer walk with Him. They turn away. We don’t know exactly why they turned away. We just know that many of them no longer walked with Jesus. Evidently the bread that Jesus had to give them—which is His flesh—they didn’t count as valuable enough to keep walking with Him.

 What is it that you want Jesus to give to you? What is it that you want God to give to you? What if He doesn’t give you what you want, but instead gives you what you need? Something that looks like a struggle all night long against the wind or a hard teaching that offends your human sensibilities? Will you grumble against Him? You probably will. The Israelites were given the impossible by God in the wilderness – manna that came down from heaven every day to feed them. They grumbled. The Jews had Jesus doing the impossible, giving food the thousands, giving health to the infirm, giving life to the dead, and giving the forgiving sins to those who didn’t deserve it—bringing the kingdom of heaven right to them. They grumbled. You’ll grumble too when the true Bread from Heaven doesn’t measure up to the expectation of your Jesus. So repent and seek to understand why the Father gives, what the Father gives, and how this understanding is meant for you to see Jesus.

 “*For God so loved the world that He gave His One and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* (Jn 3:16)The Father gives to you because He loves the world that He made. You are a part of His creation and He has placed you in it for His purpose. He gave you a name. He gave you a place. He gave you purpose and value because He loves you and He called you to be His own by your baptism into His Son’s Name.

 The Father gives you His one and only Son, Jesus. Jesus is fully man and fully Divine. He is also the Word of God and the Bread from heaven. The Father gives you His Word, His Bread of Heaven, His flesh, His blood, His Son, and His Son gives you His Holy Spirit to bring you to faith and keep you in the faith and comfort you along the way with His continued gifts of the Word and Sacrament so that you may always see Jesus.

 He promises to give you eternal life and on the last day He promises to raise you up. But that’s impossible, right? No, it’s not for impossible for Jesus, He is God. He gives eternal life, and He will give you a resurrection on the last day because He gave His flesh for the life of the world – for you. You aren’t entitled to that gift by any means. That gift should be impossible for you to receive. You and I deserve the exact opposite eternal life and resurrection on the last day. We deserve death but instead we are given life by the Bread of Life—Jesus.

When you understand the great love of the Father and the love and commitment of Jesus to you, walking with Jesus becomes a joy even in the hard and sometimes confusing times. You might not ever completely understand everything about Jesus’ teaching or why God does what He does but you can know and can understand why He gives and what He gives. He gives because He loves you. He gives you Jesus and through His flesh and blood you receive forgiveness, life, and salvation. You’ll be given the gift of resurrection to life the last day.

 Not everyone gets this gift though it is offered to all. We know many are called but few are chosen. The road is narrow, the door is small and few find it. We don’t know exactly why and this is a hard teaching, but that doesn’t change the Father’s giving nor the Son’s raising up on the last day. The constancy of God’s love and abiding presence with you and for you in the Word and Sacraments nourishes you with the bread of life unto life everlasting. This peace of the Lord for you is with you always. Amen.