

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – 11th Sunday after Pentecost – August 4th, 2018 – John 6:24-35

If you go to the grocery store and pick up some yogurt or a gallon of milk, there will always be a date printed on the container. It's the expiration date. After the expiration date is past it is not a good idea to eat the yogurt or drink the milk because after the expiration date the yogurt and the milk go bad. They spoil. Not only does food spoil. All material things eventually become out of date. And so today Jesus says, **“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life” (John 6:27)**. Today we are going to see that material things are not meant to be our ultimate good. Instead, **Earthly Bread is Meant to Point Us to Jesus, the True Bread**.

On the day after Jesus fed the five thousand with physical bread, Jesus gave a long talk about how he is the Bread of Life. For the next four Sundays we are going to be listening to Jesus unfold the different aspects of how he is the Bread of Life.

This long talk that Jesus gave about how he is the Bread of Life started with the crowd wanting more bread. It was the day after Jesus fed the five thousand and the crowd wanted more bread. So they went looking for Jesus. They had a hard time finding Jesus because the night before Jesus had actually walked on the water out to his disciples in the boat. And so the next day Jesus wasn't even on the same side of lake. But that didn't stop the crowd. They looked for Jesus until they finally found him.

Now looking for Jesus is a good thing. But the crowd was looking for Jesus for the wrong reason. They were looking for Jesus only because they wanted more bread. They were looking for food that spoils. Jesus tells the crowd, **“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” (John 6:26)**. The only reason they were looking for Jesus was because they were hoping Jesus would give them more bread. But Jesus tells them, “I have a greater bread to give you.” **“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (John 6:27)**.

When Jesus says, “Do not *work* for food that spoils,” Jesus is not against a person putting in an honest day's work and earning a paycheck. When Jesus says “Do not work for food that spoils” he means “Do *not set your heart on* things that spoil.” He says “Do not *work* for food that spoils” because we often work the hardest for the things we care the most about. Do we ever set our hearts on food that spoils? Do we ever set our hearts on having the most expensive clothes even though those clothes will soon go out of style? Do we ever set our hearts on having the latest and greatest technology even though we know that *today's* latest and greatest technology will soon be out of date? Do we ever set our hearts on having the most expensive car or furniture or TV even though we know that a year from now we will want to replace those things with things that are newer? Why do we set our hearts on food that spoils? It's because our sinful natures foolishly try to get lasting fulfillment from temporary things. You can't get lasting fulfillment from temporary things. They are temporary. But our sinful natures try to do it anyway.

Jesus says, “I have a greater bread for you, a lasting bread, a bread that endures to eternal life.” A little later in the conversation the crowd was still stuck on wanting more physical bread and so they say to Jesus, **“What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What**

will you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’” (John 6:30-31). The crowd still wanted Jesus to give them more physical bread, just like the Israelites ate manna in the wilderness. And Jesus says, “The manna in the wilderness actually pointed forward to me, the *true* Bread.” Jesus says, “**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” (John 6:32).** It’s interesting that Jesus calls himself the *true* bread. Usually we think of the things that we can see as being what is real. But Jesus says that the bread that we can see is actually a pointer to and a reminder of a greater reality: the true bread that we can’t see.

Just yesterday my family and I went on a long walk. Cori was pushing one stroller and I was pushing the other. We walked all the way down to the coffee shop on Pine Street and had some coffee. And then we took James to get a haircut. And then we walked to the library and then finally we walked back home. And when we got home we were exhausted from so much walking and we were hungry. And so we ate lunch and while we ate lunch we read a story about Jesus. And as I ate my sandwich I thought to myself “Jesus is the true bread. Just like this bread gives strength to my body, Jesus gives strength to my soul.” Do you see how the material blessings that God gives us can point us to and remind us of the greater spiritual blessings which God gives us? Earthly Bread point us to Jesus the true Bread.

One ironic thing is that we have to work very hard for the food that spoils. We work thirty, forty, fifty hours a week for the food that spoils. But the true and lasting blessings are given to us for free. The people asked Jesus, “**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.” (John 6:28-29)** The true and lasting blessings are ours simply through believing in Jesus. One of the communion hymns that we sang last week talked about this irony that the most wonderful gifts are given to us for free. Last week we sang, “**He who craves a precious treasure neither cost nor pain will measure, But the priceless gifts of heaven, God to us has freely given.**” (CW 311:3) Why work so hard for food that spoils when the Son of Man gives you the priceless gifts of heaven for free?

And what are the priceless gifts of heaven? Well, the greatest gift of heaven is Jesus himself. The crowd says to Jesus, “**Sir, always give us this bread!**” The crowd is saying to Jesus, “OK, you say you have this greater bread. What is it? Give it to us!” And Jesus says, “**I am the bread of life.**” Jesus himself is the Bread. The best part about heaven will be that Jesus is there. Jesus himself is the bread that doesn’t spoil. Jesus himself is the bread that will make us glad for all of eternity.

So let’s view the earthly blessings that God gives to us not as the ultimate good in themselves. Material things obviously can’t be the ultimate good because those things spoil. They go away. Instead let’s view our material blessings as pointers to and reminders of God’s greater spiritual blessings. The next time you eat your earthly bread let it be a reminder of Jesus, the true Bread. Amen.