

April 22, 2020 Devotion - "I Am the Bread of Life"

(Showing a loaf of bread) Did you ever stop to think about how much this simple item is an integral part of daily life?

Over 3 weeks ago when we were just getting in to this whole coronavirus situation, I went to the store to get a few things. One of the things on the list was bread. I walked down the bread aisle and was surprised that an aisle that was normally fully had less than 20 loaves of bread on the shelves.

As he often does, Jesus in the "I am" statement we are going to look at this evening uses things from everyday life to teach a spiritual truth. In John 6:35 he says: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

This verse is part of a longer section in John's Gospel where Jesus refers to himself as "The Bread of Life". It comes shortly after the miracle where Jesus feed well over 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish. With that miracle fresh on people's minds, Jesus wants to teach them (and us) a deeper spiritual truth.

Have you noticed the last 4+ weeks how much conversation there is about people who need food and how long the lines are in food banks? Conversely, how much conversation has there been about people's spiritual health and spiritual food?

That is exactly Jesus' point when he calls himself the "bread of life". After he had feed those thousands of people, everyone kept looking to Jesus to feed their bodies. He wanted them to understand that his real work and goal was to feed their souls and make sure that they would have eternal life.

A few verses later in John 6, Jesus lays it out clearly: "My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.". Many immediately think that Jesus is

referring to the Lord's Supper when he calls himself the bread of life. That is only part of what Jesus means. When he calls himself "the bread of life", Jesus is referring to all the means he uses to give us food for our souls to strengthen our faith and keep us in the faith until the end of our earthly life.

This is a rather timely conversation as most of us have most likely not had the Lord's Supper in over a month. But yet, Jesus "the bread of life" is there to strengthen our faith and support our souls through the power of his Word. Have you noticed how many opportunities, I should probably say "how many more" opportunities there are at this time for you to hear God's Word and be strengthened in your faith and supported in these uncertain times?

Yes, the Lord's Supper is also one of the tools which God uses to strengthen and support our faith, along with a daily remembrance of our Baptism and the blessings it gives us. In these times where we are not able to "eat this bread and drink this cup", Jesus "the bread of life" is still readily available through his Word to feed our souls and strengthen our faith. That is part of the reason we are having these Wednesday evening devotions at this time when we can't physically gather together for worship and Bible study.

The bigger point that Jesus is making as he refers to himself as "the bread of life" is that we should be more concerned about feeding our souls than feeding our bodies. Or to put it another way – let's not worry solely about feeding our bodies to the exclusion of feeding our souls. So often people neglect feeding their souls until they are in crisis and then they cry out to God in panic. If we feed our souls with Jesus "the bread of life" on a regular basis like we feed our bodies, we have nothing to worry about. That doesn't mean that we won't have troubles or challenges. But when those troubles and challenges come, we will be equipped with the spiritual strength we need to survive. When we find ourselves in situations like we are

currently in the midst of, we will know where to turn to find strength, hope and peace.

What a blessing to know that we have a Savior who gives us everything we need for soul and body. As we receive our “daily bread” with thanksgiving, may we also regularly feed our souls with him who is “the bread of life” in the different ways he comes to us in Word and Sacrament!

Prayer:

Dearest Jesus, my giver of both physical and spiritual bread, thank you for giving me all that I need for body and life. Even more, thank you for living, dying and rising again so that I can feed on you as “the bread of life” as you come to me in your Word and Sacraments. Forgive me for the times I have been more concerned about feeding my body and have neglected to feed my soul. Lead me to regularly use your Word and Sacraments to strengthen my faith and give me the hope and peace you desire to give me. I pray this in your name. Amen.