

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, August 7-13 (B) – John 6:35, 41-51

The Choices of Discipleship: *Filled or Hungry?*

Focus Question: *What does it mean to be filled with the promise of eternal life?*

word of life

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” John 6:51 (NRSV)

Read John 6:35, 41-51

This passage begins with the same single verse which concluded last week’s passage: “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.’” (John 6:35 NRSV) This is a critical verse in understanding the essence of Jesus.

1. *What does it mean to confess Jesus as the bread of life?*
2. *Is this term unique to Jesus?*
3. *How does that image connect with your understanding of communion?*

In John’s Gospel, the phrase “I am” is used by Jesus seven times as he reveals his identity. Not only does Jesus describe himself as the bread of life but also the vine, the good shepherd, the gate, the living water, the light of the world and the resurrection. This phrase “I am” stirs memories of God’s declaration to Moses at the burning bush when he asked God’s name. God replied, “I am who I am.” (Exodus 3:14 NRSV)

4. *Which of the “I am” passages is the most meaningful to you?*

Jesus adds fuel to the fire when he reveals no one comes to God but through him. It is Jesus who will raise people up on the last day. The Jews could not believe the son of Mary and Joseph is the one who claims to be the bread of life. They know Jesus. What an unbelievable claim! God is doing something new among them, but the crowd cannot grasp it.

5. *What makes it difficult to believe Jesus is the bread of heaven?*
6. *Would it be easier for people to believe in Jesus if they had no knowledge of his earlier years?*

When the crowd challenges him, Jesus does not meekly retreat to a back corner. Instead, Jesus pursues his point. Whoever believes in him is given eternal life. Being connected to Jesus gives long-term benefits. Moses and those ancestors who wandered in the wilderness experienced the short-term benefits of manna. Yet, eventually, each of them died. Jesus invites people to live forever. Jesus sounds convincing, yet some continue not to believe.

7. *What else could Jesus do or say to convince the crowd?*
8. *Are his words convincing today?*
9. *Why don’t some believe today?*

Jesus is the bread of life because he is the bread who came down from heaven. Later, he will share his final supper with his disciples and break bread with them saying these words, “Take eat, this is my body, given for you.” After his crucifixion and resurrection, this meal and his words take on new significance.

10. *What are we to remember from this passage?*

word among us

Take a moment to reflect on the hymn “O Living Bread from Heaven” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Hymn 542):

O living Bread from heaven, how well you feed your guest!
The gifts that you have given have filled my heart with rest.
Oh, wondrous food of blessing! O cup that heals our woes!
My heart, this gift possessing, in thankful song o'erflows! (*Verse 1*)

Jesus is the living Bread from heaven. He is the host of the meal at Holy Communion. We are his guests. The meal is meager by many standards. We are given only a little bread and wine. Yet, we are satisfied, experiencing forgiveness and blessing.

1. *When your congregation celebrates Holy Communion, what is the mood and atmosphere? Why is this so?*
2. *What has been your experiences with Holy Communion at other places?*
3. *As a guest at the meal, what do you bring to the table?*

Verse three describes the humility in which we receive the bread and wine of Christ. Continue to ponder the hymn:

You gave me all I wanted; this food can death destroy.
And you have freely granted the cup of endless joy.
My Lord, I do not merit the favor you have shown,
And all my soul and spirit bow down before your throne. (*Verse 3*)

The gift of Jesus in Communion is amazing. Consider how you make preparations to receive the gift.

4. *Share with each other your preparations to receive the sacrament.*
5. *How is “death destroyed” in the bread and wine?*

Today, many people spend much money on diets which avoid bread. Others fill up on snacks throughout the day. But when it comes to our spiritual lives, there can be a gnawing hunger that develops in our hearts if we are not fed quality food.

6. *Describe spiritual hunger.*
7. *Describe a time when you were hungry for God, God’s Word, or Holy Communion.*

The final verse of “O Living Bread from Heaven” is a prayer for serving Christ on the earth.

Oh, grant me then, well strengthened with heavenly food, while here
My course on earth is lengthened, to serve you free from fear.
And bring me home to praise you where none can peace destroy,
Where I will ever raise you glad songs in endless joy.

8. *What is your prayer after you receive Holy Communion?*

Prayer

Bread of heaven, give me life this today and forever. Amen

Dig Deeper

John 11: 17-27

last word

This week each time you eat a piece of bread,



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give thanks for Jesus, the bread of life.



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