

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, Gospel Year B

Jesus Breaks Our Diet to Feed Us Living Bread

John 6:35, 41-51

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Analysis by Mark A Marius

35Jesus said to [the crowd,] "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 41Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. 44No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. 46Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48I am the bread of life. 49Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51I 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."



Jesus trusts what we don't: that he is living bread sent by the Father from heaven, because he wants to provide for our deepest hunger.

DIAGNOSIS: A Selective Diet

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Eating from Unsustainable Sources Keeps Us Hungry and Thirsty

Hunger and thirst persist in our lives. We experience them every day to varying degrees. Of course, there is the hunger and thirst that signal the physical needs of our body, but also the intrinsic hunger and thirst to continually find meaning from our interaction with our world. We can't help but seek out a diet (a way of living) that brings us satisfaction. Unfortunately, as humans, our satisfaction is temporary, which leads us to complain that we need a new diet. Unsustained, we keep searching

for something else to satisfy our appetites.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): We Are What We Eat

In our efforts to eat well and healthily we have learned to consider the source of our bread. We place value on the way the wheat is grown, harvested, and the quality of the seed. For many, what and how we eat indicates our identity. (I'm a vegan, vegetarian, pescatarian, paleo, gluten-free, carnivore, etc.) The Jews in our text didn't trust the heavenly claim Jesus made. They thought they could find a better source of bread than from the stalk of Joseph and Mary. Rejecting Jesus as the bread that came down from heaven leaves us stale, unsatisfied, and looking for other identities to trust.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Shelf Life

Thinking we can stave off death by adjusting our diet, merely eating and drinking what we believe to be good for us, is false hope. Our ancestors are proof of that. The bread we consume does not last, nor will we. Something must be done about our diet beyond what we choose to eat.

PROGNOSIS: Living Bread



Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Eternal Life

Jesus trusts what we don't: that he is living bread sent by the Father from heaven, because he wants to provide for our deepest hunger. He trusts this so much that he is willing to give his flesh so that the world may be fed with life. He practiced a diet (a way of living) that would prove deadly—even with his insatiable appetite of love for the world. The One who sent this living bread from heaven ensured he would rise for all to enjoy. Eating this living bread raises us with him.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): We Are, So We Eat

Because Christ's flesh continues to live, we can now trust Jesus as the source of our bread and the basis of our diet. We cling to God's Word of "given and shed for you," which is more than enough to satisfy our healthy appetites. We no longer consider

ourselves hungry and thirsty—because the banquet is unending. This meal Christ gives is abundant, eternal, and sustains us in identity and mission.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Feeding and Nourishing from the Sustainable Source

Knowing and trusting who Jesus is, allows us to know and trust who Jesus tells us we are. And that transformed identity as children of God allows us to focus on feeding the hungry and thirsty. We share our new diet with them and invite them to receive the same living bread from heaven. It's a diet that lasts more than a lifetime.