

Whoever believes has Eternal Life

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost) is John 6:35-51. It is continuation of last week's gospel (John 6:22-35). There are three concepts that are emphasized in this reading, Jesus as the bread of life, importance of believing in Christ, and Jesus' assurance that he will reward faith with eternal life.

Jesus really hammers home the point that he is the bread of life. He says it in verses 35 and 48. In verses 41, 50, and 51 he adds: "*came/come down from heaven.*" Martin Luther uses an excellent and time-honored illustration to explain this "coming down," this incarnation of the Son of God as true man. Jesus is not only telling them that manna could not save their ancestors but also that the kind of food which they were seeking cannot save them eternally.

Martin Luther says: "To come to Christ is the same as to believe in Christ . . . He is speaking of bread in the sense of coming to Christ, that is, believing in Christ. For to eat, to come to Christ, and to believe in Christ are all one and the same thing . . . It is obvious, therefore, that in this chapter the Lord is speaking of spiritual eating."

Jesus changes neither text nor contents of His sermon in one particle. He repeats the main thoughts again to impress them upon His hearers. It is faith in Him which gives eternal life; that is the only way in which salvation may be obtained, by believing in Him. We have this faith through the grace of God.

In verse 35 Jesus states: "*I am.*" This is the first of seven self-descriptions of Jesus introduced by "*I am.*" In the Greek the words are solemnly emphatic and echo Ex 3:14 where the Lord identifies himself to Moses as one who was the dependable and faithful God who desires the full trust of his people. In verse 35 Jesus clearly identified Himself as the source of real life, which lasts forever.

His assurances are guarantees that he will deliver on everything he has ever promised. Below are his pledges:

- V. 37 – "*whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*"
- V. 39 – "*I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.*"
- V. 40 – "*For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*"
- V. 44 – "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*"

In verse 47 Jesus says "*truly, truly.*" What it means is "I tell you the truth" for the third time in this sermon.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for pointing us to you as the true bread of heaven that will result in eternal life. Thank you for assuring us over and over that you will take us to be with you in heaven.
Amen