

KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



John 6:41-51

You Have What Matter Most

When you look at the history of the world in very broad strokes, you realize that errors about finding God are all too common. Entire cultures or geographic areas are misled to follow nonexistent gods. Even within Christianity, God is mistakenly redefined and his Word is ignored. This sad mistake has been repeated since the beginning. Adam and Eve believed the lie that God had not shown them everything. Cain didn't think God cared if his heart wasn't in his offering.

But for today, we are only going to go back as far as Jesus' time. In our text, Jesus was continuing a discussion with some of the people who saw his miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. They had heard him say that what God wanted was for people to believe in Jesus. They had heard Jesus say, **"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry."**

But they weren't buying it. They knew Jesus' family and maybe remembered him from his youth. How could he claim to be the source of eternal life? But it wasn't just a personal issue. Jesus' claim flies in the face everything that people expect about religion and finding God.

The error that has been repeated countless times in various ways is the idea that people have to earn a place in heaven. Often we see it expressed openly when people suggest that "good people go to heaven." Faith in Jesus is not a factor; only the person's behavior determines the eternal destination.

Other times it is far more subtle. The unspoken but often very real idea is that we have been good enough or done enough or deserve God's love. Aren't we often more bothered by the sins of others — whether we know an individual or a group of sinners — than we are by our own sins? "What I do isn't that bad," I try to tell myself. It doesn't hurt me to condemn others;

but to be condemned is a different matter. It is the attitude of the Pharisees, that may not have developed as completely as it had with the Pharisees of Jesus' day, but it is all too alive in us.

Jesus' words in our text simply exposed the lie that was deluding the minds of Jesus' listeners. The path to heaven could not possibly be by believing in God's Son, they thought.

The only way to rid ourselves of this false idea is to stop playing the game of making our sins small. As tempting as it is, we must not fall into the trap of thinking we aren't that bad. Our sins are just as damning as the sins of the rest of the world. Our lack of patience with others is a sin. Our ways of controlling others so they have to do things our way are sins. So is lying and laziness. So is greed and a lack of contentment. The list could go on and includes even our secret sins.

In our text, Jesus was focused on the solution to sin. **"I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever."** Our status with God is based solely on Christ. Through faith in him — and no other way — our sins are removed. Our sins are removed because of what Jesus said at the end of our text: **"This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."** Jesus gave up his life as payment for our sins — as payment for *all* sins. At the cross, Jesus did *everything* to secure our eternity.

Yes, the Christian seeks to do good. We dare never be lazy in our efforts to do good for others simply for the sake of doing good. But don't be mistaken: your efforts to do good are worthless before God. Only Jesus saves you. That is the

point that Jesus wanted to drive home to the people who were more interested in Jesus being an earthly leader.

Jesus is not an earthly ruler. He didn't come to make your life easier. If that is all you want from you him, you may find yourself disappointed. Too many, including some of us sitting here, fall into the trap of thinking our religion is about solving the problems we face in our lives. Our prayers become short-sighted and our goals just about the next few days or years.

Certainly, the Bible makes it clear that our God is concerned about our earthly troubles. Jesus fed the 5,000 because he was concerned about people having something to eat. But we rob ourselves of the deep joy that our God would give to us if that is all we want.

Did you catch the amazing words of Jesus? **“Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life.”** He doesn't say *will have* or *could have*, but that the one who believes *has* eternal life. There is the joy that God has for you. Through faith in Jesus, you have already conquered sin and death. The gates of heaven are opened for you and you are prepared to spend eternity in the presence of God.

That future makes the most important change that could be made to your present. While you still live in a sinful world, and are yourself still sinful, you are free from sin! Your guilt is gone. Let that nagging voice that condemns you and cripples you be silenced! Your sin is gone. That doesn't mean you will be forgiven, but you are.

Death too has lost a claim on you. Your aging body that suggests that an end is coming, is wrong. There will be no end for you! You will live because your Lord has conquered death by his resurrection.

As Jesus stresses that you *have* eternal life as a sure gift because he took your sins away, you receive all that you need for a blessed life. Your Lord has blessed you with what you need in life. Not all of us have received the same amount of gifts, but we've received what the Lord sees as

best. We have different abilities that have lead us in different directions in our lives. Some of you cannot imagine standing here once a week to speak to a group of people. I'd struggle to do you job. But our differences don't matter. God uses each of us in a way that is beneficial to society and to his kingdom.

But regardless of our differences, we all have what we need. We are forgiven children of God! Our failures are washed away and your hearts are renewed. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to turn from sin and to do what pleases God. How many of our problems are because we don't trust God and worry; or we aren't content with what he's given us? How often isn't our problem because of a bad, selfish choice that we made?

Jesus tells you in this text that he is the Bread of Life. He came down from heaven to give himself for the sins of the world. Go home with the assurance that your sins are forgiven. That means that God loves you — whatever the circumstances of your life may be! In Christ, you have what you need to live a life of joy. Make time to grow in God's Word so you know what pleases him. His path — a path you can follow because of Christ! — is always best.

The grass is often green on the other side of the fence. (I know that saying has lost some of its meaning in California these days since you shouldn't have green grass.) It always seems like there is something better than what we already have.

But in spiritual matters, there isn't! The Jews of Jesus' day didn't want the simple gift offered through faith in Jesus. With firm teaching mixed with compassion, Jesus told them that they needed him. Through faith in Jesus, you have everything you need. Find the contentment that comes from faith in Jesus. Put that faith into practice and you'll find more joy. You have everything you need because of Jesus. Amen.

Pentecost 12
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