

John 6:35, 41-51

August 8, 2021

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the bread of life. Amen.

Can I tell you what one of my pet peeves is?

It absolutely drives me crazy when I get put onto a committee and all we end up doing is talking. Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk with no action. It infuriates me. Why are you wasting my time? If we're supposed to be doing something, let's do something instead of just talking about doing something.

In the synod, you always find these talking committees. I really don't know what the deal is. They study and study and study, and contemplate and contemplate, and contemplate, but nothing ever happens. Gah! It drives me crazy!

If you have been working on an issue for over a year and you still haven't done something, anything, even a failed attempt at something, then leave me out of it. I don't want to be a part of it.

I guess talk is cheap, but we've not been called into cheap ministry. God hasn't called us to just talk about things and not do anything. And so in order to break up all of the talk, Jesus is sent to us. Yes Jesus teaches, but Jesus also acts, and teaches through his actions.

He acts out what God has been saying for millennia. God is love and love is a verb!

So, don't make things difficult, just love one another. Just do it. Don't judge. Don't expect something in return. Don't ask what a person has done in the past or what they might do in the future. Just love one another.

And, you know love, right? Love builds up community. It doesn't destroy it.

As Ephesians makes clear – Just live God’s grace in the world. Be Jesus in the world through your actions. Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. Just do it – don’t talk about it – do it.

And so Jesus comes into the world and says – “I am the bread of life.”

Now, you have to realize that when Jesus said – “I am the bread of life,” Jesus was saying I am the Torah. And when he said that, heads exploded.

For thousands of years, the Torah, that’s the first 5 books of the Bible for me and you, was called the bread of life. Studying and discussing the Torah was life giving. The problem though was that’s all that was ever happening. Studying and talking. Talking and studying, and in the meantime widows and orphans were starving to death.

So, Jesus burst on the scene and says – “Yo! Wake up. I am the bread of life. Put down the Torah and look at me! See what I am doing! I am the Torah. The Torah isn’t just words on paper. The Torah is alive in the world, bringing life to the world.”

The Jewish leaders had become so engrossed in reading and studying and discussing the Torah, that they missed the point entirely. The Torah is about relationships – our relationship with God and our relationship with one another.

So, Jesus sets the written down words and then lives the Torah for all to see. In Jesus’ actions, the three main points of the Torah are lived out.

1 – You don’t have to debate God’s love. God created you. God loves you. It’s that simple. You are part of God’s family.

2 – All of the laws were given so that we could live in community together. They were meant to build up relationships, not destroy them.

3 – God is full of mercy and compassion. So, even though Jesus is rejected and crucified, he is resurrected on the third day and all sins are forgiven as a proclamation that nothing can separate us from God.

It's all relational. It's all about relationships. So Jesus proclaims - stop being heady and just live the Torah. Live the Gospel. Just go do it.

Feed the hungry. Cloth the naked. Welcome the stranger. Forgive those who have offended you and apologize when you have offended someone else. Don't take what isn't yours, instead share what you have. Don't intentionally hurt someone, instead look out for their well-being. Be a blessing, not a curse.

Jesus Christ is the bread of life, and life comes when we are in a relationship with him which then manifests itself in the relationships we have with others.

The Bread of Life is a living thing. It's not words on a page, but actual living with companions. Com-panions. If you know Spanish or Latin – Com is together or with, and pan is.... (like panaderia) Bread. Together with the bread.

Companions – those you eat bread with. Relational. It's all relational. That's why we never celebrate Holy Communion all alone.

Communion. Community. It takes relationships. It takes a group of people, because Jesus is the bread of life. Bread to be shared with others - companions.

So, it's not the book by itself that is important. It's what the book empowers us to do – to go and live in loving relationships.

The Torah says - God is merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Now - Go – live that truth in the world in everything you do.

As Luther said – you don't convert a hungry person to Christianity by making them study the Bible and then giving them something to eat. You just give them something to eat and then they will know what Christianity is all about. They will know the Gospel.

Jesus Christ is the bread of life.

God cares about your body and wants you to have life abundantly – not alone in some corner, but in a community of companions.

Elijah was exhausted and burned out because he thought he was the only prophet left in Israel. He thought he had to do everything by himself, but he was wrong.

So, the messenger comes from God and gives him some bread and tells him to take a nap, because what he thinks is the reality isn't the reality at all. He is not alone. There are more prophets waiting for him. So, he eats and he naps until he is ready to take the journey.

Isolation is the worst situation anyone can find themselves in. Feeling all alone is horrible, because we were created for community. We need companions.

That's why it is so important that we have a community in which we can be open and honest. A community in which we can confess our sin and hear the assurance of forgiveness. A community we can share bread with.

When you think you are the only one who does something or feels some way, you think there is something wrong with you. But, when you are with others who say, "oh yeah - me too" life is so much easier.

And so, Jesus comes and lives with us and experiences all the things that we do so that God can say, "oh yeah – me too." I was born. I got dirty. I cried when my friend died. I suffered and died myself. "Oh yeah – me too."

Jesus Christ is the bread of life. He is God's action in the world. He is our relationship with God. And, we are he when we live God's love in the world, when we build up community and welcome all people to be our companions, to be together with us and the bread of life.

Jesus Christ is not a dusty book on a shelf. He is the bread of life - alive and active in the world for the sake of the world.

Thanks be to God. Amen.