BC Art. 35; John 6:22-40; The Bread of Life I. The Rejection of this Bread II. The Reception of this Bread III. The Rewards of this Bread

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how often do you think about food? Well, if are listening when you kids come home from school, you will likely hear- “Mom, what can I have for a snack?” Later on- mom, what are we having for dinner? Mom, how long until dinner? Food is almost always on our mind it seems- and part of this reason is found in the temporary nature of food. Even after the Thanksgiving Meal- you will soon be hungry again. You need to keep eating- as we pray- give us this day our daily bread. But what if you could eat something called living bread- or the bread of life? Where can we find food that endures unto eternal life? So today we are going to see that we have a heavenly Father who knows that we are hungry- and he sends His Son to feed His children. Almost everyone has an opinion on Jesus today. He was a good teacher to some; misunderstood to others. A madman and a liar to still others. But today we will see that Jesus is the only source of eternal life. So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ supplies His people with living bread that sustains us unto eternal life.

**I. The Rejection of this Bread**

In our first point we will find the rejection- the turning down of this bread from heaven. Picture a man who has been wandering the desert for days without water. In his stumbling around- being close to death- he happens to find a bottle of water. But upon closer inspection, he finds that this water is simply purified water and not Fiji brand water. Do you think he would turn down the water because it was not the kind he likes- if it did not fit his personal preference? How foolish it would be to turn down water that might save your life- right? Well, in our passage today we find an even more foolish rejection. The bread of life is being freely given- offered to them without cost- free to be received- and yet the crowds do not partake. We find this rejection running through our passage. First in v. 26 we find that the people continue to follow Jesus because they are hungry. A new day has dawned and their bellies are grumbling again- they are looking for their fill of the loaves. They were content to search for physical food that would meet their temporary, physical need. How many people in the world today don’t spend all their lives searching for physical bread? Spending their days gaining and gathering earthly things- while they ignore matters that last forever! They were searching for food that perishes- and Jesus rebukes them! Do not seed treasures were moth, rust of thief can take away! Do not simply look for food that fills the belly when true, heavenly, enduring food is close at hand! The crowds were viewing Jesus as vending machine that distributed free food. They were looking for someone to fill their mouth with the delicacies of this world. Their work and their interests were focused on this world to the neglect of the world to come. They wanted to be rich towards themselves while being poor towards God. Feeding their physical flesh while neglecting their souls. This is a constant temptation for us. Many people are interested in Jesus if He will give them what they want. But Jesus does not promise us physical wealth or the pleasantries of this world. He does not provide a life of ease or plenty in this world. In fact, as we will see, the hardships and trials we endure have caused many to turn their back on Jesus! Instead of only focusing on the loaves and fish that these crowds were pursuing, Jesus uses an OT event to illustrate the necessary shift in focus. The need for earthly bread reveals a deeper, spiritual need. But just like the OT Israelites, these crowds would choose the earthly bread at the expense of the heavenly bread. So in v. 31, Jesus brings to mind the manna that God provide for His people in the wilderness. The manna in the wilderness was miraculous- it was heavenly bread graciously given to Israelites. They did not work for or earth this bread- it was graciously given to them by God. Being bread from heaven, as v. 32 says, this manna was a sign of something deeper- a picture of someone who was coming. The Israelites failed to see the spiritual truth behind the bread- they were content to eat their fill and then grumble and complain for the lack of variety. It was for this reason- for their lack of faith and rebellion against God- that the Israelites who ate the manna died in the wilderness as v. 49 says. Just as these crowds that now followed Jesus would eat the physical bread and miss out on the spiritual bread. Jesus uses the OT example of the manna to prove a point- many ate the physical food that Jesus had just given them, but they still did not believe! They failed to grasp the spiritual significance of this bread giver in their midst. So what do we find in v. 41? The Jews are grumbling again! Just like their forefathers in the wilderness! The rejection becomes complete in v. 66 where many of those who had followed Jesus no longer walked with him. In their hearts they went back to Egypt- content with the meat and vegetables in the land of slavery- choosing the fleshly things over the spiritual- and they forsook the only source of eternal life!

**II. The Reception of this Bread**

Having considered the rejection of this living bread, in our second point we consider how we might receive this bread. Jesus has clearly identified himself as the bread from heaven. The manna in the wilderness and now this feeding of the 5000 by the sea has brought this point to the front and center. Physical bread points to Him and His work. They people asked in v. 34- give us this bread. Jesus answered- I am this bread! I am the bread of life. If you want to be fed- if you want to have life and be sustained in this life- then you need me. First off, where does this bread come from? Well, it is the heavenly bread. This is the true bread from heaven as v. 32 puts it. Given to the people from the Father. So Jesus as the bread of life is a gift from God the Father to His people. It is a gracious gift- freely given. Jesus is heavenly bread- He being the Son of God who came down to us. As heavenly bread- this is the means of salvation as we will see in our next point. As a gift, this bread is to be received. Taken with the open hand. The way in which bread is to be partaken of is by consuming it- consuming it- or eating of it. Jesus makes this point in v. 50- we need to eat of this bread. And again in v. 54- eat of His flesh and drink of His blood. Now this teaching is very offensive and off putting if you do not understand it. Jesus is saying that we need to partake of Jesus- to receive Him from the hand of the Father. But how do we receive Jesus- how do we partake of His flesh? Well, the answer is given in v. 29- we are to believe in Him who was sent. Repeated again in v. 35- whoever comes to me and believes in me. One more time in v. 40- look on the Son and believe in Him. Jesus does not leave us in the dark here- we are not taking the literally body of Jesus in order to consume His actual body and blood. Rather, we are to receive the sacrifice of Jesus by Faith and partake of Him by looking to Him, receiving Him and trusting in Him! This, then, is the connection between our passage and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The earthly and physical bread of the LS- as we saw with the manna and the bread broken in John 6- are meant to represent the body of Jeus was the broken for us. We are to come to Him- to acknowledge our need- to confess our hunger- and look to the Son to provide and sustain us in our live. You- we all are needy in our sin- hungry- and Jesus alone can fill this need! He alone can be the bread for our souls that nourishes us. The bread that Jesus gives us is this- His flesh which was broken for us as v. 51 clarifies. Body broken and blood shed on the cross. We partake of His body and blood as we eat and drink- as we participate in the LS with a heart of faith. So the LS becomes a visible sacrament- a pictures of this truth- Jesus is our heavenly bread that must be taken, received, eaten, believed in. Along with this promise- just as the physical flesh is nourished by physical bread, so surely are our souls nourished by Him our living bread! So one of the main points of the LS is this- to remind us that we need to look to Jesus- to trust in Him alone to meet our pressing need!

**III. The Rewards of this Bread**

And the reason that we need to look to Jesus alone is this- that in Him are found the blessing of eternal life. Asked another way- what does the bread of life do? What is the reward promised to those who embrace and believe in Him? Well, consider what daily bread does. Daily bread is the chosen means by which God sustains our life. We have health and vitality only if we are daily nourished. The Israelites were repeatedly taught this truth as they had to go out every day- to gather their daily manna! So it is, that our pressing, spiritual need is also supplied by our living bread from heaven. As Jesus said in v. 27- He is the food that endures to eternal life. Once you partake of Christ- He will be to you all that you need! No other bread- no other spiritual sustenance is needed! He gave His life to be our bread- and those who partake of Him will never hunger and never thirst again as v. 35 puts it! Jesus richly and fully supplies for all our needs- so much that our every spiritual need is here supplied. Those who partake of Christ are granted life- and a lasting home in glory. They will never be cast out- as v. 37 puts it. Their eternal acceptance and welcome into glory will never expire. And finally- those who are united to Christ by faith will be raised be on the last day- v. 40. It is clear when we put these verses together, that every need we have is here provided in Christ! The reward that Jesus gives to those who partake of Christ is this- their present spiritual needs and their future physical needs are met! Not only is their soul raised up, not only are their sins forgive and they are made right with God; but also their bodies will one day be raised to dwell with God for all eternity! The world finds life in Him- life for our souls and bodies! Present and everlasting life! As Jesus reminds us- we do not live on bread alone- but rather we live by the Word that comes from the mouth of God! Not only is the Bible the word of life for us- but it is also the way of life because in this Word we read of Jesus who is the true, heavenly bread of life!

To conclude, the miraculous feeding of the 5000 proves that Jesus is able to feed the hungry masses. But what the crowds missed was this- daily bread is temporary and passing. We need something more- we need a sustenance that is lasting. Eternal bread! More than that, we need bread not only for our bodies but also for our souls. Living, heavenly bread! We need bread from heaven that give us eternal life for our souls and our bodies! And that is the very thing that Jesus is for us- our food and drink unto eternal life! He is the heavenly bread that brings salvation and resurrection life! Jesus Christ supplies His people with living bread that sustains us unto eternal life. We need food- we need to eat- and often. But as necessary as daily bread is- the need for Jesus is even more pressing! For without Him and apart from Him, we can do nothing!