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Peace, Sun Prairie

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Pentecost 11 - First Sunday in 1007 Stonehaven Dr.

John 6:24-35

THE FOOD THAT ENDURES
TO ETERNAL LIFE

“I don’t need to be rich. All I want is to be comfortable.” Ever heard that sentiment? I imagine each of us has entertained that thought at some time. “I don’t need to be rich. All I want is to be comfortable.”

True, it’s no fun to be uncomfortable. But what if I told you that that sentiment reflected a deadly kind of idolatry? Would that be shocking? I’m not talking about a godly contentment like the Apostle Paul who wrote, *I’ve learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance, whether well fed or hungry... I can do all things through him who gives me strength.* I’m not talking about that. But to say, “I don’t need to be rich, I just want to be comfortable,” is to say, “I don’t want to have to pray, ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ I don’t want to have to keep looking earnestly to God for all my needs. I don’t want to have to trust God.

I want to have everything I need right here so I don't have any worries." You see, this reflects the basest form of un-trust, or shall we say unbelief, that resides in our hearts. So blind are we to the depth of our own natural depravity that we actually considered such a sentiment to be a virtue: I don't need to be rich. All I want is to be comfortable.

Dear followers of Jesus, our Lord came to this earth to comfort us, but not to make us comfortable. Do not follow Jesus with the same purpose as the crowd who had witnessed His miracle of the feeding of the five thousand and afterwards crossed the Sea of Galilee to come after Him. The all-knowing Son of God told them with a most solemn oath: *I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.* Rather, Jesus lifts our eyes up and away from mere creature comforts and draws our attention to the food that endures to eternal life. Today, from the words of Jesus let's be filled with the food that endures to eternal life.

First, let's consider that it is a food He gives us. Jesus told the crowd, *Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man*

will give you. If He gives it to you, then you do not need to “work” for it. But then what did Jesus mean by saying, *Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life?* Does that not imply we have to work in some way? Consider all the effort, all the trouble the crowd went to, to follow and find Jesus - probably not sleeping that night, jumping into boats, crossing the Sea of Galilee, hiking from village to village, asking around until they tracked Him down. They went to all that effort in hopes of getting more free lunch. When I was serving as pastor on Long Island, New York, a young man named Yuri, a new Christian who had immigrated to the states from Russia, used to ride his bike twenty miles one-way each week to come to church. It was that important to him. His hard pedaling did not earn him anything from Jesus. Rather, Yuri earnestly desired what Jesus would give him there -the food that endures to eternal life. It was worth the effort.

Just the opposite of you and I having to earn the food that endures to eternal life, we actually receive it through faith. Listen again to John chapter 6, *Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works that God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”* You can almost see

Jesus shaking His head, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.” Indeed, that is the work of God. God the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts so that we believe in the one God has sent. It is not to my credit that I’m a believer. The Holy Spirit gave birth to my faith in Jesus when I was baptized. So not even faith is some work or requirement I have to fulfill. In this way faith is the opposite of me having to do something to be saved. Faith is trusting.

And notice how Jesus is always pointing to Himself. You don’t just have faith. You have faith in the one He has sent. You have faith in Jesus. You believe in Jesus. You trust in Jesus. You rely on Jesus. Yuri rode His bike to church every Sunday because He trusted Jesus. He trust Jesus would give Him the food that endures to eternal life.

But what is the food that endures to eternal life which Jesus gives? Here in John chapter six we see how Jesus masterfully draws the people in and brings this discussion to a climactic invitation. Listen again: *[The crowd] asked him, What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”*

(Notice how they're baiting Him. They want a repeat of the feeding of the five thousand.) *Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* (And now the clincher!) *"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."* Then Jesus declared, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

This ought to give us goose bumps. Jesus drew them along to the point that they were *asking* for this bread from heaven. Then He offers... Himself! Jesus *is* the food that endures to eternal life.

We might experience hunger pangs in our stomach sometimes, but real hunger is not being sure if everything is good between you and God. Real hunger is wondering what's going to happen to you after you die or puzzling as to why God let's bad things happen if indeed He loves you. Real hunger is the uncomfortable realization that you have guilt -like our guilty longing just to be comfortable so that we don't have to bother relying on God for what we need -which is a sin against

the First Commandment. Real hunger is wishing for a way *not* to be guilty with God, a way to be on good terms with God so that we can be sure we're under His blessing now and escape His judgment later.

The One who fills that hunger is Jesus. He is the bread from heaven, the bread God Himself gives for that hunger. It is Jesus who lived a sinless and righteous life. It is Jesus who was sacrificed in pain to atone to God for sins. It is Jesus who came back to life again indestructible and everlasting. The way to eat and drink Jesus is to believe in Him. Eat and drink Jesus. Believe in Him. Consume Him. Fill yourself up on Him so that His righteousness becomes your righteousness, His atoning sacrifice on the cross becomes your sacrifice and His resurrection to life becomes your resurrection to life. Whatever He is, whatever He has, whatever He has done -it all becomes yours and belongs to you now.

He's the bread *from heaven*. That means He took the initiative and came to this world for you. He lived and died for you. He pursued and found you. And today He speaks to you, offering Himself to you as the food that endures to eternal life.

I may not be entirely comfortable in this life. I may not feel that I have all that I need. Sometimes it's hard just to get through the day. But what of it? Through faith in Jesus I am one hundred percent sure I have a God who is totally on good terms with me, whose total forgiveness and peace I have, who erases all my guilt. Through faith in Jesus all has been made right between me and God so that I don't have to walk around under a cloud of dread. Through faith in Jesus I have a God to whom I can look nonstop for my needs and who harnesses bad things to elevate me with even greater spiritual gifts, who uses bad things to make me even more sure of salvation. Through faith in Jesus I have a God who will give me the necessary strength and will to follow His way and not my own. Through faith in Jesus I do not need to fear the casket or what happens after. I will escape God's judgment and be welcomed for eternity in heaven. Through faith in Jesus I have all things -as the Bible says -all things are yours and you are of Christ and Christ is of God. Christ is of God and on Christ you are fed as you believe in Him.

No, Jesus does not come to make us comfortable. But He does come to comfort us. He is the food that endures to eternal life. This food will never let you go hungry or leave you thirsty. Amen.