

## **The Lasting Work of God. Pentecost 11 August 9, 2015 (Children – 40 years of food)**

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Grace and peace are yours from God your Father to keep you in the saving faith in your Lord and Savior. The Gospel for our sermon is a continuation of the lesson after the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6:24-35. These are Your Words, given to us to sustain our faith in Jesus. Your powerful Word is truth! Amen!

Dear Christian Friends,

These days people are concerned about benefits they have with their jobs, especially health benefits. People have gone on strike so as not to lose those benefits. It can mean the difference between being cured from a disease since the treatment is paid for or remaining ill because the person can't afford treatment. We have benefits of being a Christian: life here with Christ as our Savior followed by eternal life in heaven! What does it take for us to keep those benefits? Losing them is 1,000 times worse than losing health care. It will mean an eternal loss. But, Jesus, in our lesson, gives us great hope as He talks about

### **The Lasting Work of God!**

**First, seeing God work outwardly does not guarantee we will keep our faith.** Jesus was talking with some of the 5,000 that He had fed a day earlier by His miracle. To them Jesus was a God-send if they could only convince Him to be their kind of Savior. They wanted daily bread from Jesus. But, would they be satisfied with just a miracle of bread? After Jesus told that crowd to believe because of His earlier miracle and His own Word, they did not accept Him. They said, "*What miraculous sign will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert.*" (v.30-31) They wanted something bigger, like feeding the whole nation with Manna, like Israel had at Moses' time. But, do you really think that their unbelief would change to faith with a greater outward miracle? Next Jesus would have to tackle the problems of sickness or unfair treatment by others. Jesus warned them, "*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.*" (v.26) Jesus had so much to offer beyond the bread, but they had no room in their hearts to take in Jesus' message and believe in Him as God's Son and their Savior.

We may try to bargain with God to get something we want while promising to have a greater trust in Him. We may ask for healing. We may say, "If you are my God, then help me with my money problems." We might bargain with God so that our lives have less stress or trouble, then we'll keep believing in Jesus.

But with that attitude, we will be disappointed in God because His ways are not our ways. We don't always win. We don't fully get over our injuries or problems. The devil is behind all trouble in this world and he is our sworn enemy since we are in Christ, so we shouldn't be surprised if he attacks us with more troubles and pains. Jesus often went without food. He had little time to rest because of so many crowds. He felt personally rejected when many Jews refused to believe His message. Even many of the crowd in our verses later left Jesus when He spoke too much about spiritual things. Jesus stated that His purpose was not to bring "*food that spoils, but food that endures to eternal life.*" (v.27)

So, we don't want to tie our faith only to Jesus' physical blessings. Jesus calls us to believe in Him through His promises to give us eternal life! Isaiah wrote, "*Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?*"(Isaiah 55:2) Some of you may remember a show called "Deal or No Deal", where contestants choose a briefcase with an unknown amount of money in it. Then they are offered a deal to trade their suitcase for a known amount of money. Some people have little money and others more. But with faith in Jesus we win it all! We have blessings through Christ already here where He promises to work everything for our good and we can be certain of our future with eternal life in Christ!

**Second, our faith in Jesus will endure.** With the temptations to put our physical needs ahead of our spiritual needs, can we be sure that our faith will endure? We must daily put down our old sinful nature which tells us to doubt God's promises and tells us to find our own answers just like many in the crowd did. But, just as God kept His promises in Christ, He will keep His promises to us! Jesus said, "*The Son ... will give you food that endures to eternal life. On Him God the Father has given His seal of approval.*" (v.27) God gave His approval at Jesus' baptism that He was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. God gave His approval through the miracles that Jesus did. His final "sign" was when He raised Jesus from the dead to declare that our Savior's work was complete. By His death, Jesus paid for our eternal punishment and by His sinless life He earned eternal life for us. He freely offers His blessings for all to receive by faith.

The promises of God brought us to faith and will keep us in the faith. Jesus said, "*Ask and it shall be given to you.*" (*Matthew 7:7*) When we pray according to God's will, we will see our prayers answered. When we are troubled in our faith, Jesus calls out, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" (*Matthew 11:28*) He promised, "*Peace I leave with you.... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" (*John 14:27*) These are promises for our faith!

Jesus said in our verses, "*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.*" (v.35) Who else but Jesus can help with our greatest needs? Who else can resolve the hostility between God and us? Who can give us hope in the face of serious illness or death? Jesus is our eternal Savior! That is why He came: lived for us, died for us, and came alive for us! He came to answer our greatest need: to be saved from God's judgment. Jesus had so much to offer. He called Himself the "Bread of Life." If they believed in Him, they would never have spiritual hunger again. Why would we want to believe in anyone or anything else beside Jesus and His promises?

Yet, many in the crowd did not understand. They wanted to save themselves by special works that they considered godly. They asked, "*What must we do to do the works God requires?*" Jesus answered, "*The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.*" (v.28-29) Here is where Jesus shows the difference between unbelief and faith. Unbelievers want to do good works to win God's approval. The Bible states it is God's work that saves us. He loved us while we were sinners. He sent His Son to die for all while people were spiritually dead. God's promises call for faith and at the same time keep our faith alive!

God's Word also warns us of the consequences if we lose the faith that God worked in us. Without faith in Christ we would be separated from our loving God forever. Without Christ, we would suffer in eternal loneliness. But, in Christ we'll experience eternal happiness! Revelation 7 tells us that all things that bother us now: suffering, hunger, problems, and death will disappear. And the greatest thing is that we will stand with Jesus covered in His holiness and we will share in His glory forever.

With such great blessings promised to us we will never want to lose the benefits we have in Christ. God has given us true faith through His promises and He will keep us in that faith. If we are ever uncertain of God's love, we need only look to the cross, where Jesus, our Savior gave His life to give us eternal life. Life will not be easy for Christians, but we have Christ who cares for us. He has won the victory! Amen.