Text: John 6: 22-35

**Introduction**

Maybe it is because I’ve been trying to lose a few pounds. And I’ve been denying myself at least some food and drink. And as taking a couple weeks off to take David back across the country comes closer, disrupting the house and home, the wife and children. Maybe because of those things, in the past few weeks the providence of God has been the theme. As Luther’s explanation to the first article of creed continues, “he daily and richly provides me all that I need to support this body and life.” The feeding of the 5000 assures us that even if we only have 5 loaves and 2 fishes, with God it will be more than enough. And in the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus walking on the water does not pass us by. He does not leave us to the trial alone, but he gets into the boat with us. The Providence of God is more than enough. Even if we don’t see it. And I’m thankful for those texts reminding me and letting me see.

**Text**

And I think I said before I’m a synoptic gospel guy. Personally I like Luke. His entire gospel seems to take place while walking. We all walk on. Sometimes outward, sometimes towards home, sometimes with face set toward Jerusalem, and sometimes we know not where or with whom, until we recognize them in the breaking of the bread. And then they are gone. The synoptics are all simple in that they are all in the moment. But John…John might be telling the same story, but he’s always operating on another level. John is always demanding that we ask a deeper question. The rising generation I believe would call John “so meta.”

John has told the same story of the feeding of the 5000 and walking on water. But John alone turns to the crowds. They saw the disciples get into the boat. But they also knew that Jesus did not get in the boat with the disciples. In John Jesus hustles the disciples away – because the crowd wished to make him king, and he didn’t want the disciples participating in that – and Jesus stays and clears the crowd before heading off to pray. The crowds might not have been privy to Jesus walking on water, but they aren’t stupid. When the next day they find Jesus on the other side of the sea they ask him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

Jesus is either an Olympic runner, maybe like Elijah being lead out into the wilderness after his confrontation with the Priests of Baal and running all the way to Sinai on the bread provided by the ravens. Or he snuck onto a ship and nobody caught it. Or something more miraculous has happened.

But here is where John’s Jesus is different. He calls out those crowds for what they are after. For what they are seeking. “Truly, Truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”

The Providence of God is surely a good thing. And we need to be reminded of it. Because we too quickly might find ourselves like Israel in the wilderness complaining that being slaves in Egypt was better. Somehow forgetting that the last thing they were tasked with was making bricks without being provided the straw, and misremembering Egypt as that place where we “sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full.” Missing the signs and wonders and just wondering when the bread will come. We need to be reminded of the Providence of God because it is such a common thing. Israel could eat Manna and quail every day for 40 years in the desert, and still grumble. We too quickly take for granted what God provides. After all, he provides for the just and the unjust alike. Just because I have “food and drink, house and home, wife and children” doesn’t seem to mean much.

Yet that is what Jesus chastises the crowds over. All they want is the bread. You had you fill and now you are back for more. You completely missed the signs and wonders. You see God give you temporal things, and you will sail across the sea to get more temporal things, but you won’t ask the one who provides for the eternal things. “Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.”

God is going to give you everything you need to support this body and life. Ask for something more. Seek what you don’t have. Knock.

**Christology**

And this crowd does. A minor miracle. “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Now we can quibble with how they express it, but John has them asking the deeper question. Not just give us our daily bread, but now that we have been fed, how do we live? Where do we get this food that endures? Where is the water that bubbles up to eternal life as Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well? John’s metaphors are different: life, food, water. But not simple water only. Not food that perishes. Not this life, but eternal life.

God has certainly supplied the simple stuff, but he wants you to have the real stuff.

And Jesus answers the crowd plainly. “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

In the real stuff there is nothing that we ourselves supply. In the simple stuff, yes, God typically works through means. He doesn’t typically send manna. Instead he allows the rain to water the soil. And by our work in our various vocations we eat, we make our way. But in the stuff that does not perish? We can’t do anything to make it. All that is asked is that we believe. Believe in the one whom God has sent. Believe that Jesus is our providence.

We are saved by grace, through faith in the works of Christ Jesus alone.

And occasionally you will come across some mid-wit who will try and say something like “Jesus never claimed to be God.” Now they probably have all kinds mid-wittery to excuse things like what Jesus says here. They do in fact. They will say that Jesus never said this, John is just making it up. But if you believe that, you’ve really just written off the scriptures. But Jesus’ claim here is staggering.

At the urging to seek greater things, the crowds quickly fall back into the simple demands. “What sign do you do? What work do you perform? Moses gave us manna. Maybe you could make some more of that bread?” They’ve all seen the signs. They’ve even had the bread. But Jesus wants to give them more. So he corrects their thinking. “It was not Moses, it was my Father.” Remember that the simple providence is but the sign of the deeper things that God wishes to give you.

And what are those deeper things? “The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven to give life to the world.” And what is that bread? “I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” God himself has come down to us, and gives us himself. And this Jesus is that bread, is God himself.

**Moral**

We hunger and thirst. We eat and drink and it goes away for a while. But we all have that deeper hunger and thirst. Who made us? Why? What are we here for? And so many of us spend our lives trying to quell that hunger. Feeding it the spiritual equivalent of ding-dongs and twinkies.

Maybe we find some, but try and hoard it. Bring enough back for a week. And it ends up like the manna, spoiled. We need our daily bread.

Maybe we just try and ignore that hunger. We try to fill that eternal hole with temporal things.

But that hunger is there. We were made for God. And we only find our fill in God. And that is Jesus’ claim. I am the bread of life.

In Christ alone do we fulfill that deeper hunger.

**Eschatological**

The Psalmist urges us to “Taste and see that the Lord is good. (Ps 34:8).”

Taste that the LORD certainly provides us what we need for this body and life.

But don’t stop there. Ask for the good stuff. Ask for Jesus. The Bread of Life.

Whoever comes shall not hunger.

Whoever believes shall never thirst.

God does not just want to give you your daily bread. He wants to give you this bread – the bread of life, himself - always.

Test him in this and see that the LORD is good, and He will make you whole.