

Sermon Notes – August 18, 2024
The Holy Gospel of St. John 6: 51-58
Peace Lutheran Church
“Wisdom Prepares a Feast”

Late summer is full of the anticipation of the start of a new schedule – what with last minute preparations for a new school year, and the busy start-up of church education and fellowship activities. Fall is a time to reflect on prioritizing one's time commitments according to individual and family needs and values.

Pulled in different directions and balancing competing needs of family in this hectic time can be overwhelming. Christians are not alone in wondering, “How do I and/or my family find our ‘center’ in this busy life? How do we decide what to do and what not to do? Where will we find the strength to handle these pressures?” The scripture readings for today speak to these important questions.

First, Wisdom invites us to stop and come to the feast to be fed with “maturity, prudence, and insight.” Wisdom's banquet draws us into relationship with the Father, the One who made us and all creation. Jesus, the living bread and God's very presence, draws us even closer into a centering, life-giving relationship with Him. He is God's living bread (John 6: 51), living water (4: 10), and presider at the Father's banquet (Luke 14: 16, 21). A centered, purposeful life is found in Jesus Christ, His flesh and blood, and fellowship around His table.

Second, centered in God's gracious relationship with us through Jesus Christ, we have the gift of the Father's direction. King Solomon knew that He could not govern God's people without the gift of His wisdom. Life is full of decisions and conflicting demands, whether it be a ruler or any of us. Ephesians 5: 17 counsels all Christians to seek to understand the will of the Lord and do it. This is moral instruction that is good for the long haul of life. Doing God's will can be difficult and costly. Christ took this difficult path and bids us follow. As we follow Christ, we have the Good News -- that when we empty ourselves (Matt. 16: 24-26), God is there to fill us with the Spirit (Eph. 5: 18). The God who raised Jesus will not abandon us in our serving and need.

Finally, what about the nourishment and strength to live the life of faith? God feeds us both physically and spiritually. In John 6: 51-58, Jesus points to Himself as the food that gives eternal life.

Wisdom issues a gracious invitation to eat, but too often we foolishly pass up the feast because we are distracted, or busy, or even too proud to eat something we have not prepared ourselves. The early Christians in Ephesus and elsewhere struggled to live in the new reality of Christ crucified and risen. Old indulgent habits and self-serving ways were great temptation. Today Christians can be distracted and derailed by all the choices to be made and the temptations to indulge themselves in a self-glorifying and materialistic culture. Choices must be made when it comes to worshiping God and serving the neighbor. Living the long haul of faith will call for self-denial, courage, and trust. Jesus made this radical point in John 6: 53. Like Jesus' original listeners, we have

trouble with the concreteness of Jesus' gift of flesh and blood at the Lord's table, but there it is. We follow Jesus, our crucified Savior. However, there is also long-haul Good News. In this flesh and blood of Jesus, we have life, now and eternally. In eating at the Lord's table, we are joined with Jesus, His death, and His victory over death. Saving food for now and forever.