

Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost – August 18th, 2024

Introduction to the Day

Wisdom prepares a feast, sets her table, and invites all to come and eat her bread and drink her wine. The first chapter of John's gospel owes much to the biblical tradition that imagined Wisdom as existing before anything was created and having a role in the work of creation. Christ, the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24), today invites us to eat his flesh and drink his blood. John's gospel includes no account of the institution of the Lord's supper, but here we can't help hearing Jesus' words as an invitation to the meal of bread and wine we share.

Greeting – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Welcome

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the God of manna,
the God of miracles,
the God of mercy.

Amen.

Drawn to Christ and seeking God's abundance,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our provider,

help us.

It is hard to believe there is enough to share.

**We question your ways when they differ from
the ways**

of the world in which we live.

**We turn to our own understanding
rather than trusting in you.**

**We take offense at your teachings and your
ways.**

Turn us again to you.

Where else can we turn?

**Share with us the words of eternal life
and feed us for life in the world.**

Amen.

Beloved people of God:

in Jesus, the manna from heaven,
you are fed and nourished.

By Jesus, the worker of miracles,
there is always more than enough.

Through Jesus, † the bread of life,
you are shown God's mercy:

you are forgiven and loved into abundant life.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“Gather Us In”

#532 vs. 1,2

Prayer of the Day

Ever-loving God, your Son gives himself as living bread for the life of the world. Fill us with such a knowledge of his presence that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life to serve you continually, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Reading – Proverbs 9:1-6

¹Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars.

²She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table.

³She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls from the highest places in the town,

⁴“You that are simple, turn in here!” To those without sense she says,

⁵“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

⁶Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.”

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Gospel – John 6:5 1-58

Jesus said,] ⁵¹“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

The Gospel of Our Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

And so we continue. Jesus is the bread of life. Language and imagery that we have now heard for a fourth week in a row, with one more in a row.

This time around the Jews who are in the crowd start to dispute among themselves. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” This is one of the many things that lies at the center of church discourse throughout history. How it is that we view this sacrament. A sacrament (the Lord’s Supper), by the way, that isn’t actually discussed in John’s Gospel, aside from a whole chapter of Jesus telling us that he is the Bread of Life.

While we could get into the meanings and differences and swath of beliefs around the wine and wafer that we receive at the Lord’s Table, I don’t believe that is what Jesus hopes for us to get out of it. Many will take a look at this very text and state, “Jesus literally says that any who eat his flesh and drink his blood will have eternal life, thus, no other understanding of this meal will suffice.” All while missing the fact that Jesus says, twice, that this meal is for anyone who eats it.

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.”

Jesus, here, does not say, he does not add, “as long as they meet the criteria.” He simply, succinctly, states, “this meal is for whomever eats it.”

Again he says, “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.”

Once again, he leaves out any qualifiers. He simply, succinctly, states, “this meal is for whomever eats it,” AND, “in their eating of this meal, I will make a home in them and they will find a home in me.”

Why do we get this so mixed up?

Why do we hear what Jesus says rather clearly here and think that it is up to us to determine who it is that he is talking about when he uses the phrases, “whoever?”

What do we think we, as church, and we have done this since the beginning of time, accomplish when we place stumbling blocks and hurdles between God’s people, and God’s table?

You might be thinking to yourselves, “what is this man talking about? We don’t do that.” And you might be right. But, is that enough?

When we hear Jesus use language, broadly inclusive language, like “whoever” is our response really to say, “good for us. We do that.” ??

In using language like this, that in the other Gospels and in our worship becomes, “for you and for ALL people...” Jesus is bringing us back to the story that got this whole bread of life summer stretch started. When Jesus took the little bit that the boy had to offer and told his disciples to feed the hungry masses.

The story that follows has Jesus continually urging those who will listen to bring others into the abundance that is life in God’s grace.

He never stops calling them, urging them, pleading with them, to imagine just how expansive this grace is. At every turn Jesus is reminding them that this meal, this grace, is for everyone. And, in realizing that we are included in that “whoever” is the call to go and invite.

People of God. When we are so quick to wonder to ourselves, argue with ourselves, prove to ourselves that we are right, about who can't have this meal – Jesus is here reminding us that this meal is for everyone, and that is our responsibility to figure out who it is that we very well may be missing.

When Jesus uses the language that includes all of God's children among those for this meal belongs, do we believe it? If so, what are we doing to make it a reality?

Jesus tells us that in this meal a home is found.

For us, that home is in Him.

And...

For Him, that home is in us.

Let us strive to be that place where home is felt for all who enter. Where God's meal of grace is extended to all people, both those who've always been denied, but also to those who've been denying.

That is God's hope for us in Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Hymn of the Day

“I Am the Bread of Life”

#45 vs. 1,3,4

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Calling on the spirit of Wisdom to guide our hearts and our minds, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Wisdom has built her house. May the church be a house of wisdom for all who enter. May we continue to grow and stretch in ways we never thought possible. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Wisdom has mixed her wine. May the harvest seasons be plentiful this year. We pray for orchards, vineyards, farms, and all of creation (*local agriculture may be named*). Protect and conserve the earth. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Wisdom has employed her laborers. Be with all who seek adequate employment. Guide our economic and governmental leaders to support the people of our world with fair wages and safe working conditions. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Wisdom has invited her guests. Make your presence known to all who feel lost, abandoned, or hurting at this time. Direct your spirit of care to all who seek healing and comfort (*We pray especially for Matt, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Wisdom has set her table. May this congregation be a welcome table to all who seek the refuge of God. Break down walls and barriers that prevent us from offering a seat at this table to anyone who comes. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Wisdom has shown her path of insight. May we journey on her paths, looking toward a bright future while remembering from where we have come. We give our thanks for those who have gone before us. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We lift up these prayers to you, gracious God. Receive them into your holy keeping.

Amen.

Peace

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Jesus, Bread of life,
you have set this table with your very self,
and called us to the feast of plenty.

Gather what has been sown among us,
and strengthen us in this meal.

Make us to be what we receive here,
your body for the life of the world.

Amen

Sacrament of Holy Communion**Lord's Prayer**

Christ has set the table with more than enough for all.

Come!

Hymns #471 & #483

Post Communion Prayer

Jesus, Bread of life,
we have received from your table
more than we could ever ask.

As you have nourished us in this meal,
now strengthen us to love the world with your own life.

In your name we pray.

Amen.

Blessing

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
✠ be upon you now and forever.

Amen.

Sending Hymn

“Gather Us In”

#532 vs. 3,4

Sending

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ!

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.

And all of Good Shepherd said,

“AMEN”

Your Generosity in Action:



For the month of August our Mission Offering will be going to Fire Relief Efforts at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Longwood.

This congregation lost their sanctuary and suffered some damage to their Parish Hall in a July 23rd Fire.

Clean-up is underway and conversations about how/what to rebuild are taking place. Any bit that we can offer in support will go towards their future as God's people called to that place.

THANK YOU!!

Monthly Financials to date:	Total Revenue	Total Expenses	Difference
	\$9,473	\$7,132	\$2,341
	2023: \$20,879	2023: \$18,137	

Welcome Back Sunday and
Fall Program Kickoff 2024

Sunday, September 8

Come for worship and stick around
for fellowship and activities for all ages!

More details soon!

A photograph of several hands held up in a line, each holding a letter to spell out 'WELCOME BACK'. The hands are of various colors and are wearing colorful wristbands. The background is a bright green field with white flowers.

Shepherd's Closet with assistance from Outreach Team had their summer Give-Away last week



