

"I am the bread of life," Jesus declares, and the Jews grumbled about Him. But why is this, we must ask? Surely this isn't a bad thing. No but it is a defied expectation.

That is the constant problem with Jesus. He stubbornly refuses to confirm Himself to our imaginings and our iron-clad logic. It is much safer to know about Jesus than to encounter Him as He really is in the pages of the Bible and in the Words of Scripture.

And so it is for the crowd that day. They wanted someone to fill their aching bellies like Jesus did the day before on the far shore of the Sea of Galilee. They saw what He had done but could not conceive of why He had done it – because His motives ran counter to human, that is sinful, understanding.

They saw Jesus as a divine politician currying favor with the crowd – giving them bread (And weren't His combative encounters with the Pharisees an entertaining enough circus?). Obviously, He was trying to create a political movement and He had God on His side. They were ready to crown their bread king.

You don't understand what God is about Jesus tells them, **"This is the work of God, that you believe Him who He has sent."** Well that's not how this is supposed to go. Jesus, you need to lean into the crowd. After a little bit things seem to get back on track and the talk is again of bread. They cry out, **"Give us this bread,"** the bread of heaven, **"always."**

I am that bread. You don't need your bellies filled, you don't need what Moses gave, you need me. Jesus pities them; He has compassion on them because they are poor miserable creatures who can't even properly feed themselves. Jesus had them and then lost them. Suddenly, the gleam is coming off Him.

"Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does HE now say, 'I have come down from heaven.?'" That's not really their complaint. They were ready to accept Jesus as come from heaven – a great miracle worker and prophet – maybe even the Messiah. But...He would not be the Messiah they wanted.

This has always been our crisis of faith. From the Israelites in the wilderness who despised the Manna, the heavenly bread, that God provided them to today when we can't seem to look to God for an instant to provide our daily bread – not when government or corporations can provide so well.

The crowd gathered around Jesus needed the bread He had come from heaven to give and so do we. We need this more than anything else in the world. Jesus is the only one who can give us this life. Jesus is the only one who can sustain this life.

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus tells the crowd. **“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.”** And you eat all the Starbucks, and McDonald's, and you have the iPhones and hybrid cars, and you too will die and you know it.

But who wants to hear that? Lutheranism can be dark – because we know what it is to be human – poor miserable creatures living to die. We embrace that truth just as Jesus did. We point at all the daily bread of this world and we cry out – you will die!

How tempting it is to give the people what they want. To be a little less relenting about sin. To say you can have your cake and eat it too. To say that Jesus is good but there is other good stuff out there that will see you through.

Pretty lies will always be more popular than hard truths, but we live with Jesus – in the light, in the truth. And so here we are – We have no promise of our best life now. We say that suffering is part of the Christian life – but we have a God who sent the very bread of heaven to give us life.

So come trusting his promise now and receive life-giving bread, yes, Christ's own body and blood in his Sacrament. Here Jesus gives you the living bread from heaven. Here he gives you the Bread of Life. Amen.