

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 13) – August 4, 2024

“³²Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

–John 6:32–33–

When my son began eating solid foods, it was exciting! He seemed to love just about anything I set in front of him. It didn’t take long, and he began to gag every time he ate solids. He couldn’t keep anything down, and from about 9 months old, he stopped growing and gaining weight. His pediatrician was baffled, so she sent him to a pediatric gastroenterologist, who could do further testing on our son. At 14 months old, we learned that he had an autoimmune disorder called Celiac Disease. His body could not break down the protein of gluten properly. So our son had a new diet to follow, which avoided wheat, barley, and rye. That meant no bread for our son.

We found it difficult to keep him feeling satisfied after a meal. He loved green beans—he’d eat a whole can in one setting! But he wasn’t too keen on gluten-free bread just yet. That eventually changed. He’s now a healthy 12-year-old boy, and his gluten-free diet is his way of life. Bread is staple on any table around the world. In Latin American countries, tortillas are served with every meal. Any country you visit, there is some form of bread served because it satisfies. It helps us feel full, so we continue with whatever tasks need to be done.

That was manna for the Israelites. It satisfied and provided earthly sustenance. Jesus is speaking to a crowd of people in John, chapter 6. These verses come from what is commonly referred to as the “Bread of Life Discourse,” which covers John 6:22–71. The crowd is mistaken. They think the manna their ancestors received came from Moses, but Jesus corrects them. The manna came from God. God provided an earthly need for his people. How often do we fail to give God the glory for what he has done for us? I believe God provided us with the right doctors to diagnose our son. Otherwise, our son could have failed to thrive, which could have led to developmental problems down the road. Bread, manna, gluten free bread are good. We need food to survive this life. But just as Jesus was teaching the crowd of people, we must remember that the bread of this earth is temporary. If it’s left out, it will mold or rot. So Jesus teaches about another bread that God provides, one that we need more than manna or earthly bread. Jesus is talking about the “Bread of Life.” He’s talking about himself. Only God can give us life everlasting through the life and death of Jesus Christ. He is the true bread from heaven. He is the Bread of Life, and only he can provide this life through the gift of faith.

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