

**Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family****Title: What We Eat Makes Us****Lesson: John 6:24-35 NRSV**

*<sup>24</sup> So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.*

*<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."*

*<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

**(Slide 1)** How have you enjoyed or overcome this midsummer heat nowadays? Playing in the water? Eating ice cream while watching a TV show like America's Got Talent? Or just taking a nap? Esther and I visited South Korea about a couple of years ago. Back then one of the things I missed about Korea was humid summer because California was too dry. When I lived in Korea, I never imagined that I would miss the humid summer in Korea. It is so humid and hot at night and at dawn that people can't sleep well. Are you familiar with a sauna? The summer in Korea is like a sauna. So, Koreans do several things to get through the hot summer. Watermelon is the most popular fruit in the summer in Korea. They put the watermelon in the refrigerator to

cool and eat it, or make a watermelon punch and drink it. I don't know the exact reason why watermelons are expensive in Korea. On average, one watermelon costs \$20-\$30. According to the article, the most expensive watermelon was about \$250 in Korea. I know we can buy it for \$4-\$5 in the states. America is a very nice and generous country.

**(Slide 2)** Besides eating watermelons and playing in the water, there are traditional ways to overcome the summer heat in Korea. It is called 이열치열 (Ee-Yul-Chi-Yul), which means "Fight fire with fire." It may sound a little bit of a cultural difference or strange to you, but it is said that Korean ancestors in the past when they don't have air conditioners or fans overcame by eating hot food in the hot summer. So, one of Koreans' favorite foods in summer is 삼계탕 (Samgye-tang) which means chicken stew. Chicken and ginseng are known to raise human body temperature. Samgye-tang is made with chicken, ginseng, garlic, and many good things for the body. When people eat this, they sweat, and it cools their body, and they feel cool. This is the principle of fighting fire with fire. As I've talked about food this morning, I feel hungry.

**(Slide 3)** I don't know who said this, but there is a saying that "The food we eat makes us." Food is important for sustaining life, so what we eat is important because it is said that most diseases come from stress we feel and the food we eat. So the food we eat over several decades has an influence on our health. Therefore what we eat is important because it makes us.

By the way, in today's gospel lesson, Jesus introduces himself as bread of life. Jesus gave his life for us, just like rice and bread, to save us. So he became the most important food in our lives. Why did he become the food for our life? It's because of love. With the unconditional love of the cross, he generously gave his life to us who hunger and thirst for love.

**(Slide 4)** Today's text is after Jesus fed more than 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. People who experienced the miracle there considered Jesus as just a magician or a wizard. It was the same with disciples. They must have thought that Jesus, who performed miracles, had supernatural

powers. They may have wanted to profit politically and financially through Jesus' power.

Although they experienced the miracle, they had no idea what the meaning behind it was. So, Jesus told that "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." (26) Miracles mean more than that. The crowd did not see beyond what God was showing them by superficial miracles. People focused on being full but didn't know who Jesus is. In fact, the miracle of five loaves and two fish was an event that revealed that Jesus is the Savior who gives life to the world. It was an invitation for people to return to the God who gives eternal life. Jesus said "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." (27)

Although they experienced what Jesus did, they had questions saying "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?" (30) At the time, most Israelites were well aware of the manna their ancestors ate in the wilderness after the Exodus. The greatest difficulty for them in the wilderness was getting food every day because the desert did not guarantee them a daily bread. Their only solution to solve the issue was manna God gave them from heaven. (Exodus 16:31) So, they used it for three meals a day. Sometimes they complained to God as they were so sick of manna, but they sustained their life with it for 40 years until they entered the promised land.

Verse 32 tells who gave the bread of life: "It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven." Like this, God gives us the true bread through Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John testifies that Jesus is the giver of true life and abundant life, just like he fed more than 5,000 people. Jesus is the bread of heaven and the bread of life for everyone in the world. Therefore, the miracle of five loaves and two fish is not just a material miracle, but an invitation to those who are thirsty for true liberation and salvation.

The bread of life is opening a new relationship with God. Such a relationship is possible only through Jesus Christ. No one can enter that new relationship with God except through him, the bread of life.

**(Slide 5)** The journey of our life is similar to the wilderness the Israelites walked through because no one can guarantee what will happen in the future. Just as the Israelites needed their daily bread in the wilderness, we need our daily bread in our lives without exception. The meaning of “I am the bread of life” that Jesus said is He is the bread of eternal life that comes down from heaven every day in the wilderness of our lives.

Let’s return to the story of food I said at the beginning of the sermon. The food we eat makes us. As we join in the communion, we eat and drink the bread of life and the blood of salvation of Jesus Christ. Joining in the communion means believing and embracing Jesus as our Christ and Savior of life. The Holy Spirit comes to us and dwells in us as we eat and drink the bread of life and the blood of salvation. Living with Christ is no longer living by us, but by Christ. Like this, what we eat is important because it makes us. For people who eat and drink the bread and blood of Christ, the kingdom of God has already come. They live eternal life on this earth with Christ. Their bodies grow old and return to the dust, but they never die. Their lives are always blessed, happy, and full of joy.

To embrace Jesus as the Christ of our lives is to choose the true life. I want to say that you are very lucky to be here this Sunday morning. God loves you. Now all we have to do is to join in the communion. As we eat and drink the bread of life and the blood of salvation that Jesus gave us, we join in the grace of God and feel His love. And we share that grace and love with others. Practicing love doesn't necessarily mean great things. Practicing love begins with expressing love and gratitude to your family and forgiving each other. Therefore, what we eat is very important because it makes us. Hot dogs, pizza, pan cakes, steaks and hamburgers are yummy, I know, but let’s all take and eat the bread of life Jesus gave us together because it makes our lives.

May the Holy Spirit dwell in us as we eat and drink the bread of life and the blood of salvation! And may we love and forgive others as Christ loved and forgave us. Amen.