

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed, the Passover was near, St. John tells us.

In a little while, the people would be eating the Passover lamb, unleavened bread & bitter herbs.

In Deuteronomy, Moses commands the people, **Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction... that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.**^{Deut. 16:3}

Not only the slaughtered lamb, but even the bread was to remind them of their freedom from slavery.

But even before that, bread was a reminder of something:

"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground," the Lord told Adam, **"for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."**

Our daily need to consume bread/food, is a reminder of our constant need to consume God's grace.

It too, is a "bread of affliction," reminding us of our need for freedom from sin's bondage.

But there is another bread that Jesus offers us in today's text for meditation;
the kind of bread that does not perish... but that endures to eternal life.

As follows in Jesus' name:

So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal." Then they said to Him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." So they said to Him, "Then what sign do You do, that we may see and believe You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus 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. For the Bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to Him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

Jesus said to them, "I AM the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe."
(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

The day before, Jesus had fed the 5,000 men, plus women and children — it was indeed a great sign.

The people couldn't help but see the correlation between Moses and the promised prophet.^{Deut. 18:15}

Moses had said, **"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you —"**

And just yesterday, after preaching to the people all day,

Jesus had miraculously fed the great crowd with bread in the wilderness.

"Could this be the prophet?" Indeed, He was, but they apparently forgot the rest of that verse:

— it is to Him you shall listen.^{Deut. 18:15}

Those that were seeking Him the next day weren't concerned anymore with His teaching or words,

they were concerned with their bellies, as Jesus said, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.**”

They wanted to make Him their king, their bread-king, their food supplier.

With a king like that, who can supply food out of thin air, there would be no worry of famines.

I mean, how great would it be to have, not just 40 years of bread like their fathers had under Moses, but an eternal supply... or at least until their deaths.

But that isn't how the crowd first came to Jesus the day before.

St. John reported that **the large crowd was following Him, because they saw the signs that He was doing on the sick.**

I wonder if this means more than they were just looking for a miracle worker.

I wonder if that if means something more along the lines of they were hoping He was the Messiah.

Jesus seems to have preferred that they came to see the signs, the reversal of sins corruption, rather than eat their fill.

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But can we blame those people seeking Jesus the following day? You know what it is like.

You have sought Jesus. You have found Him to be – and confessed Him to be – the promised Messiah, the Savior, the almighty God-in-the-flesh.

You have enjoyed the comfort of your sins forgiven, having been washed clean in Holy Baptism.

You have heard Him declare you saved, declared innocent and righteous in Him.

And this is great news, and you get to hear it week after week, even midweek during Lent.

This is great! And... you know... after a while, it can sometimes feel... the same.

Perhaps you have been raised in the Church, so you haven't heard anything different.

Maybe you came in a little later in life, but you have grown accustomed to this news.

And you know, it will be the same news next week as it was last week, so it's no big deal if I miss regularly, or even frequently.

I know it will always be there, when I need it.

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Without watchfulness, slyly, subtly, the concerns of this world can start to seem more...necessary.

Like those in our text, in this world of corruption and sin, we worry about securing daily provisions.

We like to have, not just the certainty of our daily bread, but the bread for the week... the month... even into our retirement.

And so, we work toward that end: We save for retirement. We save an emergency fund.

We might even prep a little food and store some water, just in case the supply chain goes down.

Now don't misunderstand me, I am not saying that this is wrong or bad to do.

It seems wise, especially with growing inflation and the higher cost of living these days.

In fact, it is a reminder that this is “bread of affliction,” a reminder of our corrupted world.

But it is so easy to forget, especially when we are being so wise in investing and preparing...

It is so easy to forget, especially when we haven't made the wisest financial decisions...

It's so easy to forget, especially when we had prepared and the catastrophe was just to catastrophic... that this is all **bread that perishes**.

Like with Job, it can all be wiped out by a single day: a bad day on Wall Street,

a few more bank failures, higher inflation, another pandemic, fire, flood... a war, your own gov't.

If you feel your blood pressure rising, take it as a red flag.

Where is your heart?

What are you really trusting in for your good? And what are you taking refuge in in all distress?
You can't plan or prepare for everything. Nor can you really control anything.

But **You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth.** ^{Deut.8:18}

What you have amassed already... it is the Lord's doing, not your own.

You, like Job, **came naked from [your] mother's womb, and naked shall [you] return.** ^{Job 1:21}

...

On your death bed, should you be fortunate to lie in one and have the time and ability to reflect,
what is it that will be important to you?

Will you look back and wonder if you should have invested more or worked longer hours?

Will you bemoan what the Stockmarket is doing or wishing you had stockpiled more food?

These things are of the **bread that perishes.**

But the Lord would have us also recognize that He is the giver of all that perishing food.

This is what He was teaching the Israelites under Moses as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 yrs.

Their miraculous daily provision of manna was to teach them to rely on the Lord each & every day.

It was a lesson that took a few days & yet 40 yrs. to learn, as some tried to store the manna overnight

(whether because they were lazy and didn't want to gather it the next day,

or because they did not trust that the Lord would provide the next day's supply).

...

That was, except for when? When did the Lord not give them any manna?

Was it when they rebelled and sinned against Him?

After the golden calf incident? Or after they complained about the manna?

Or after they threatened to stone Moses and return to Egypt?

No... the Lord only withheld manna on the Sabbath Day, the day of rest,

when they were to devote that day, not just to physical rest, but primarily to spiritual rest.

They were to abstain from gathering the perishing bread, in order to receive the **bread that endures.**

On your death bed, what will be important to you?

Will it be the time you spent working for and fretting about the cares of this world/perishing bread?

Won't it be the time you spent seeking Him, the hours you spent in the Lord's presence,

preparing for this very moment... not working but receiving...resting in His work of salvation?

As Jesus said, **the work of God is that you believe in Him whom He has sent.**

Of course, He didn't mean that the work you were to do was to believe in Jesus;

but that is God's work upon you, to give you faith in Jesus' life of perfect trust, lived on your behalf;

faith in His atoning death, suffered for you to receive the punishment your faithlessness deserves.

Will you regret the times you heard Him declare your sins forgiven?

Will you have considered it a waste of time that you spent *hearing, reading, marking, learning,*
and inwardly digesting the Bread of Life... that endures to eternal life?

Will you regret your time spent at His table, at His invitation, to partake of Jesus' body and blood?

It is God's work on you, through the Word-made-flesh, to give you faith to believe His Words

when He says, **"This is My Body given for you.... This cup is the New Testament in My Blood,**
shed for you and for many for the remission of your sins."

And consider this great sign: in this supper, Jesus takes the perishable bread

and joins it to the **Bread of God, the Bread of Life that endures to eternal life.**

Will you be ashamed of the provisions you made for the gospel to be spoken and administered to you and to your fellow Christians?

...Of the offerings given to support the ministers of the gospel, near and far,
and to support the places dedicated for its preaching and teaching?

Will you be ashamed of the prayers prayed on behalf of all people according to their needs?

No, these things will not give you anxiety.

They will be pleasing to you, knowing that they are the good works the Lord had prepared for you.
And through them, the Lord has well blessed you on your way.

Naked you came, and naked you will enter eternal life, but filled with His **enduring Bread of Life**.

Blessed be the name of the Lord."^{Job 1:21}

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria