

**John 6:35-51; August 18 & 19, 2024**

**Pentecost 13**

*"The day we are born brings us one day closer to death."* How's that for a sobering thought this morning? Yet, it is true, isn't it? From the moment we enter this world, we are on a journey—a journey that, for each of us, will ultimately lead to the grave. This might seem like a dark way to begin a sermon this morning. But it's a truth that we cannot ignore. It reminds us that our time here on earth is limited. It also reminds us that there is a much bigger goal awaiting us in heaven.

Yet, as followers of Christ, we know that this journey is not a march toward oblivion. Sometimes we have taken vacations that we make up along the way. We may know sort-of where we are going. However, we make it up as we go along. Our journey in this world is a journey toward a destination -- heaven. Yes, our earthly lives will end, but that is not the end of our story. Jesus Himself promises us in our text today: **"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."** So, today as continue from last week looking at Jesus being the **bread of life**, we see that it is he who will raise us up to eternal life in heaven.

A major theme in John's Gospel is how Jesus came to give life, especially eternal life. You see this promise throughout the book of John, including in chapter 6. Three times in our text today, Jesus speaks about raising up his followers to eternal life. This promise of resurrection is central to the Christian faith. As we confess in the Nicene Creed, the goal of the Christian life is the resurrection of the dead and life in the world to come.

Death came into this world as a result of sin. Ever since the Garden of Eden, death has cast its deep shadow over every aspect of life. Our relationships, our intellects, our communities, our bodies, our emotions, our wills – nothing is exempt from death.

What if someone could stop death? What if death could be stuffed into the box? What if someone could change death? That was what Jesus was saying. **"Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life."** In the verse before our text, the crowd says to Jesus: **"Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."** Jesus says: *Okay, its me. I am the bread of life. I will take care of everything for you. I will raise you up from the dead. I will give you eternal life.*

Jesus could not say it any clearer. Jesus promises to raise all who come to believe in Him. It is God who drags us to Jesus. God drags us to the foot of the cross. However, by our human nature, that is not where we want to go. So, we are like a little toddler who throws himself on the ground kicking and screaming because he doesn't want to do or go the direction his parents want him to go. We value our independence. We celebrate our ability to make our own decisions. We like being on our own, making our own outcomes, choosing our life path and forging ahead as best as we can. We like to be *self-sufficient, self-sustaining, self-reliant, self-supporting*. Sometimes, we like to be independent of God as well. We don't want to go his ways.

**"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them."** The word that is used for draws them doesn't have the idea of making something look appealing so that you might come to Jesus. It has the idea of being dragged in kicking and screaming. Have you ever gone fishing and caught a bigger fish? It takes work, doesn't it? The fish doesn't want to come jumping into the boat on its own. In fact, it is a miracle that the Gospel works faith in our hearts. Jesus wants to give us life. In his gentle guiding and protecting hands he hold us.

Paint this picture in your mind. A father is with his young son at a playground. The little boy is watching other kids go across the monkey bars. So, the father grabs his son by the waist and lifts him up. His little hands grabs one bar and then another. When they get to the other end of the monkey bars, he has a big smile on his face as he says: *"I did it, Dad. I did it."*

To anyone who was watching, it was obvious the son did very little. There were times when both of his hands were off the bars and yet he did not fall because his dad was holding him. To the son, however, this was a major accomplishment. He made it all the way to the end. That's what Jesus does for you and me. That's God's plan. **"For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I**

**shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."**

What was the reaction of the crowd that day? **"Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"** In essence, they were saying, "We know this man. We know His family. We've seen Him grow up. He can't be God. The idea that He came from heaven makes no sense." Moreover, this wasn't the Messiah they were expecting. But in reality, this is exactly the kind of Savior we need.

Ever wonder what it may be like to walk with Jesus in heaven. What a day that last day will be! Death will be conquered. We get to experience Jesus raising us up to him. *"The day we are born brings us one day closer to death."* That's why it is not a sobering thought at all. Rejoice in those words of Jesus – **"Here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."** Amen.