

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## “Eating Living Bread Together”

“Jesus said, ‘I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.’” (John 6:51)

I had a wonderful vacation. I had a wonderful vacation, in large part, because my family and I were able to spend some time together. One of the things that I enjoyed the most was mealtime. Because we live in different states and our schedules are such that we don’t have the opportunity to be together much anymore, it was all the more special. And I don’t think that my situation is unique. Whether our kids live with us or not, we find little time to be together let alone to eat together. Mom goes here, dad goes there, and the kids are all over the place.

Some years ago I served as a chaplain to a Lutheran senior citizen’s home in Sacramento, CA, and during the course of one of my visits, I remember asking a resident what she thought was the biggest change she’d seen over the years. I somewhat expected her to say something about the invention of the automobile or the television or whatever. But I was a little surprised when she said that the biggest change she’d seen in all her years was mealtime – families, she said, just didn’t eat together anymore. And, in her mind, that accounted for a large part of the family problems we see today. Maybe she’s right. It’s not just the sharing of food she was talking about. It’s about the fellowship. Food is simply the excuse that brings the family together. In the end, it’s the fellowship though that strengthens the family. Unfortunately, many of us are just too busy with the busyness of life and we forget or overlook or even neglect the business of life. I suppose that’s why special times like family vacations or family holidays or whatever are so special. In fact they’re so special that many times we wish they would never end.

God wants those times to never end as well. In fact, that’s why God created us in the first place – to live in and to enjoy fellowship with Him and with one another forever. But when mankind fell into sin, that life, that fellowship was broken. No longer was it even possible to have what we were created for. And left to our own devices we never would again. In fact, the history of mankind is really the history of people trying to recapture in whole or in part that which they lost in the Garden – the full life of fellowship with God and with others. But thanks be to God, He would not let that loss be the final word. He promised that He Himself would restore that fellowship, that life again. And so He promised to send a Savior, One who would save all mankind from the brokenness that sin created. And that’s exactly what He did in and through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. In His life, death and resurrection Jesus provided the means by which all mankind might be reconciled and, in that, restored to a right relationship with Him and with one another for all eternity. He provided that means by giving up his own life, by sacrificing his own fellowship with the Father, so that all who believe and trust in him might have that life and fellowship once again. That’s what he meant when he said, “I

am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” As one believes and so takes in this bread so even now they have life – life that is best seen and experienced in fellowship with God and with others. It is life seen and experienced now, in part, and it is life that will be seen and experienced in full for eternity.

It’s that life and that fellowship that we have come together to see and experience again today. Having been made members of God’s family through our baptism into Christ, we come together on a regular basis over the food of Word and Sacrament to enjoy that fellowship which is ours by grace through faith in him.

In his book, Hereafter, David Winter tells the story of a little girl playing in the mud who asked her mother, “What’s mud for?” “For making bricks,” said her mother. “Well, what are bricks for?” asked the little girl. “For making houses, dear,” replied the mother. “Well, what are houses for?” continued the little girl. “For people,” said her mother. “And what are people for?” asked the little girl. And with that, the mother had no reply.

What are people for? God tells us that people are for Him and for one another. And that we can see and experience that already in this life in His Church as we eat of the living bread come down from heaven, Jesus Christ, through Word and Sacrament. And, in the process, we find out for ourselves not only what people, in general, are for but what we, in particular, are for.

Today it is our privilege to gather around Word and Sacrament once again in worship and as we do, to be fed by Christ himself. May we truly enjoy this time together as the family of God and may it strengthen us not only in our fellowship with Him but also with one another. And may it strengthen us to reach out to those around us, to those who still don’t know Jesus or who don’t believe in him as their Lord and Savior, with the invitation to come and join us in the foretaste of the heavenly feast which will have no end. May God grant this to us all for the sake of him who is the living bread come down from heaven, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.