

Pentecost 9, 2009  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
John 6

The sermon text today is the Gospel of John, chapter 6. Last week in worship we began reading John 6. Today we continue the chapter and over the course of the next couple weeks we're going to finish it, reading a section of verses at a time we'll have this chapter finished by mid-August for sure. For now, rather than looking at just this one section of verses, I want to look at the whole chapter, and I encourage you to do the same. Go home today, pick up your Bible, read ALL of John chapter 6; and let's begin with prayer:

Jesus you are the bread of life come down from heaven, you are the pearl of great price and compared to you, there's nothing. Forgive us for clinging so tightly to passing things and fading pleasures, and keep our hearts and minds focused on you, and your will, and your word, and your kingdom; unto life everlasting. Lord Jesus in your name we pray, AMEN.

My wife Mary has read a book. In fact, she has read this book about 2 dozen times already, it's her favorite novel in the whole entire world; and it's called The Keys of the Kingdom, written by a fellow named A.J. Cronin, and I'd like to summarize the plot for you quickly right now.

The story takes place in China, about 100 years ago or so. A newly ordained English priest is assigned to a Catholic church over there. It's a huge church, thousands of people attend. He goes there, quite excited, and notices something right away. After worship each week, people sort of stand around with their hands out, kind of like this. Long story short, the priest discovers that his predecessor, the former priest, had given bags of rice to

people after church each Sunday—in other words, he'd basically been paying them to come to worship. "Come to church, sit through the service, here's your rice, have a nice day." Well the new priest is, aghast, and he quits doing this—and people quit coming. No rice, no way, and the congregation drops in size from hundreds and thousands, to 50. And the rest of the novel is about how the priest starts the church over, with the ones who were there, just for Jesus.

This novel I think is *the perfect way* to understand the Gospel of John, chapter 6. What happens in this fictional church in China, is exactly what happens to Jesus by the Sea of Galilee. John 6 opens with a miracle, we read about it last week, Jesus feeds the 5000 with a single sack lunch. Five pieces of bread, two fish sticks—and Jesus feeds the multitude, an incredible miracle. Well that's what we read last week, we pick the story up this week, where the crowds have found Jesus again the very next morning, and the crowds say Hey. Jesus. Great to see you, you know that was some miracle you worked last night at supper, yessirree—and would you look at the time? It's breakfast time! Know what I mean Jesus, it's, breakfast time!

Yes, said Jesus, I know what you mean. You're here looking for another meal. You don't want me, said Jesus, verse 26, you don't want the words of eternal life. You want a Denny's Grand Slam! And Jesus launches into a

lengthy sermon—it begins today, it continues beyond verse 35—a sermon about how He, Jesus, is the true bread of life come down from heaven. Eat of His Body, drink of His blood, believe in His name—and you will live as God’s people now, you will live as God’s people forever! Oh, said the crowds. That’s nice. But, where’s the breakfast buffet, can’t you at least get us some donuts or something? No, no donuts today said Jesus—just me, the bread of life from heaven, that’s it, that’s all, just me, Jesus! And they left. John 6: 66, “At that time many turned back, and no longer followed Jesus.” I guess, just Jesus, just wasn’t enough.

I wonder about the church today. I wonder about us—would “Just Jesus” be enough for us? I mean, we try awful hard here, don’t we? We try awful hard, youth outings of various kinds, a Hog Roast after Bible school. Rally Sunday coming up in a few weeks, maybe some free food that day, tell all your friends. Bells and whistles, dog and pony shows; contemporary music, can’t forget that!—but take it all away. Take it away, if all we had was Jesus—forgiveness of sin, life, salvation—if all we had was Jesus. Would that be enough to keep you coming? Or would we all just, drift away as well.

Now, there’s nothing in the Bible that says the Church has to be boring. There’s nothing spiritual about being tedious. Jesus worked miracles, He cast out demons, He was an interesting guy to be around, but at the end of

the day He wasn't a showman He was a Savior! And at the end of the day, all we have is the story, of how He saved us. Remember it? In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given *to die* for you. And for His sake, God forgives you all your sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, who eat of that true bread come down from heaven, He gives the power to become the children of God! And He promises life and salvation. All we have is that story—Jesus Christ crucified resurrected coming again—is it enough to claim your life for God, or do we need donuts all the time too?

There's nothing in the Bible that says Church has to be boring, but let's be real. It's not fair to our Sunday School teachers or to our Parish Board of Education to ask them to stand on their heads each week to get your children into class. The teachers have Jesus, is that enough for you as parents to make the commitment? It's not realistic to expect a trip to New Orleans every month, but we've got Jesus here, young people do you have commitment? Do you belong to the Lord, yes or no? Young adults, we'll try a Sunday School class just for you, we'll try a softball team and maybe a cook out but you're not children and we don't have to entertain you. We're not going to try. We've got Jesus here, is that enough? Parents, grandparents, all of you, whatever your age, I try, honest, but some weeks my sermons are going to be boring, I know that. And at no time will anything I say or do here be as

interesting as Whiskey Lake, it is however the Gospel. Is that enough, or do we need Cornhole in the aisles?

There's nothing in the Bible that says we have to be boring here—Jesus most certainly was not. There's nothing that says we have to be boring but it does say repeatedly we need to be faithful to Christ—as Christ most certainly was faithful to us. He died, He rose again. He sends forth His Spirit and is with us now. He guides and sustains, forgives and blesses—blessed us beyond anything we could hope to receive. He promises us life someday in heaven, but gives us a cross to carry now, it is not sugarcoated. It's not always fun. But it is our faith, and it offers us something that all the bells and whistles of this world never could—

Hope, joy, peace, purpose. Life, now and forever, through Christ the crucified, in whose name we pray, AMEN.