

August 11, 2024
Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost

“Christ Is Our Life”

John 6:35-51

It has been a really, really hot summer here in South Louisiana. For a lot of folks I think Jesus is kind of like our heat and humidity here. He is always there. Some days you feel Him more than others. You adjust to His presence and sometimes you may forget about Him, but He is always hanging out in your life. His presence causes you to live in certain ways, seeking out holiness and righteousness like the heat makes us seek out air conditioning.

Of course, that is a really lousy metaphor because our climate is oppressive and miserable and we who know Jesus rightly receive Him joyfully as the Savior He truly is. He is pleasant, comforting, refreshing, rejuvenating...and I just couldn't think of any good metaphor of this world that continually does that for us.

My point is that we who love Jesus tend to think that we are living our life in the light of His life, death and resurrection. His wonderful salvation is present, a comfort at all times, especially when we've messed up in sinfulness yet again and crave the assurance of His forgiveness. His love and grace is a big, big part of our existence. I think most Christians who practice their faith would agree with this.

Christ here in John's Gospel is proclaiming that this idea of faith does not go far enough. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.”* Jesus is not a Savior hanging out with us as we navigate life. Jesus is our sustenance. Jesus is our life itself. Jesus, in another powerful “I am” statement drawing a line straight from Him to Yahweh, almighty God, proclaims that without Him we are dead; there is no life.

So rather than the heat and humidity metaphor where we see ourselves living life in the midst of Christ's presence enveloping us, it would be more correct to move the metaphor about a hundred miles to our south. Your life is like walking along the floor of the Gulf of Mexico in the darkness in a wet suit. Jesus is the line of oxygen coming down from above. He would be the feeding tube also if you want to push the image that far. The point is that Jesus is not just hanging out in your life. Jesus is life. Remove Him from the mix, you are dead.

We tend not to think of it this way. Why? Well, from our perspective if Jesus were to depart from us or, more correctly, we turn away from Him, it seems we just go on living, right? We still breathe, sleep, eat, commiserate, laugh, cry, etcetera. At some point in the future death will come, but right now we still have life here.

But from the only perspective that really matters, that of God Almighty, this world, this life, is already underwater, totally dead. St. Paul says earlier in Ephesians quite plainly, *“You were dead in your trespasses.”* Hear again how he describes those who are apart from Christ: *“This I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the **life of God** because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.”*

The curse of sin that fell upon this creation is death. The world and life God created with humanity as its pinnacle stands completely ruined by mankind's sin. This is no longer life. This is a strange, broken aberration of the life God wants for us and it is corrupt, poisoned even. Satan and sin, like the depths of the sea, seek to crush and drown us. Jesus is making this point when he says, *“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.”* This life and the bread of it here...is still death.

Christ came into this mess, was crushed for our transgressions, and in His resurrection established for all time the lifeline of salvation. It is the gift of true life everlasting, offered to us in the midst of this darkness, received by the faith that accepts this hard truth: Jesus is the bread of life; the only sustenance that sees us through the darkness until that time He lifts us from the depths to the place of light He has prepared for us.

Our struggle in faith is to see this truth properly. Our fallen nature doesn't want that. It likes this death-riddled existence where we seem to hold some sway, to serve our self-interest and set our own terms. But that nature was put to death with this life in our Holy Baptism into Christ. *"That is not the way you learned in Christ...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."*

This is our reality in Christ; dead to the world and alive to God. We are called not to live the purest life we can as sinful being of a fallen world, but to live the life we truly have by grace in Christ; truly holy and righteous indeed!

I know, it's pretty mind boggling because this life and our many shortcomings, failures and sins in it are right in front of us every day. But that's why we live by faith, people! That faith is grounded in a person, Jesus Christ, who lived this reality in the flesh and made it a human thing so His reality would be made our reality. This is the true promise we love...and live.

And this is why we continually feed on Jesus, the bread of life, in His Word and Sacraments, to continually renew us in the truth and promise that though this life is death and darkness, life and light are ours forever. *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."* Jesus has done so by His cross, and in that human flesh reigns alive and victorious. He is life. The world here is not.

So keep that goofy metaphor in mind. Jesus as the ever-present condition in this life, like our summer heat and humidity? It seems good, but it doesn't go far enough. We are in the depths of a creation of death, pressuring us to make it our permanent home. Jesus is our certain lifeline, feeding us life unto eternity.

When this earthly life gives you good blessings, give thanks to God that even in this fallen aberration He graciously gives us good things, echoes of the perfection this world was designed to be. Cherish such things, but see how all of it is tainted by sin and death and be looking forward to it all one day being transformed and perfect in Christ's glory. When things are bad and the pain, affliction and death come a calling, know that it's just the fallen world and broken life being what it truly is. Know that Christ is your life, so this world of death cannot ever kill you.

Whether your times here be good, bad or indifferent, be always in prayer, praise, study, reflection, relationships, vocation and everything else, feasting on Jesus Christ, the bread of life. His is the life and light that sees you through this present time and brings you to the completion of the true and perfect life you already possess in Him.

Amen.