

11th Sunday after Pentecost
“The glorious works of God for all people” John 6:26-29
August 4, 2024
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, John 6:26-29

“26 Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

28 Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

So far our text.

Have you watched some of the Olympics this past week? If so, you probably noticed how the athletes prepared themselves before each competition. Whether it is gymnastics or swimming or track, the cameramen focus on the face of the athlete right before the event. What do you see? Complete seriousness and focus, right? All the training and hard work has prepared the competitor for this moment... to strive for a medal...hopefully a gold medal. The athlete blocks out all the distractions and wills himself or herself to immerse oneself in total dedication to that goal.

The country is counting on them. Family is rooting them on. The world is watching to see if new heights can be achieved, records broken, and a trip to the podium can be earned. They get after it, don't they? It's the drama that we enjoy watching as we also cheer for our USA athletes from the comfort of our sofas!

Jesus, in our text, is telling us...you and I included, to get after it. After what? After the crown that doesn't perish... for the food which endures to everlasting life. Make this

your highest focus and endeavor. And Jesus quickly adds that this enduring food is a gift from the Son of Man, **“because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”**

What’s Jesus saying? Don’t spend your life going after what doesn’t endure, but for what is eternal. Jesus had just performed the miracle of the feeding of 5000 as we heard two weeks ago. The people followed Him across the sea of Galilee because they wanted more of what is perishable. But Jesus wants to offer them a food that is imperishable. He is offering Himself the Bread of Life to the people.

Get after it! Go for the gold! Jesus is offering Himself as the prize! On team Jesus, everyone receives the gold medal of eternal life.

As God inspired Paul to write in **1 Corinthians 9:24-25**

“24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

Do we sometimes get so caught up in chasing after the perishable foods of this life that our souls are left hungering for the Bread of Life? Oh how important it is to read and hear the Word of God on a daily basis, and come to God’s house to feed our souls and receive the very body and blood of Jesus for our souls to eat and drink for our spiritual strength – the very forgiveness for the sins that are beating up our beleaguered souls.

It made the news, that the athletes who were staying at the Olympic Village in Paris were being fed a climate friendly diet. Basically, animal-based proteins were in short supply at the Olympic Village. Athletes' frustrations prompted organizers to quickly acquire more than one ton of meat and 1,500 pounds of eggs to meet demand.

How much more important is it to be fed a soul friendly diet of rich Word and Sacrament on a daily basis!!

Now, as soon as Jesus told the people to not work for food that perishes but for what endures, how did they respond?

“What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

Did any red flags go up when you heard their response? For Lutherans who have been so well taught that we are saved by grace not by our own works, the alarms start sounding in our souls, don't they?

What shall "WE" do? That WE may WORK the works of God?

The word "work", "erga" in the Greek, is repeated quite a bit in our text. We get the English word "ergonomics" from it, which is "the study of people's efficiency in their working environment." Basically, how can people work more productively and safely? You know, like not trying to throw a shotput in the rain and slide all over the place as your twirling your body around, like I saw yesterday.

Can you obtain your salvation through your good works or not? That is the crucial question for all people to answer. The answer, of course, is no. A resounding "no"! We can't keep God's law perfectly. No one can.

A pharisee once asked Jesus in Luke 10:

"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

27 So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' "

28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

Yes, a perfect score, a perfect life is needed to inherit eternal life – perfect love of God and neighbor. Have you or I or anyone achieved this perfection? Not close.

But, Jesus holds out the Good News of the Gospel on full display for us! For Jesus tells us plainly:

"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

It's God's work, His glorious work of saving all people from their imperfect sinful work by sending Jesus, the Bread of Life, to suffer, die and rise again. His perfect work on the cross forgives all people their sins! And it is God's work, His alone, that give you the faith to believe and confess that Jesus is your Lord!

“32 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

No, Moses, didn't give you perishable manna. It was God Himself. And God the Father gives, graciously gives the true bread from heaven, He who came down from heaven as true Man, born of the virgin Mary, Jesus Himself! Jesus gives life to not some, but all people, to the world, all countries, all nationalities, male, female and all who are confused about who they are at their birth!

Listen to this glorious truth from Romans chapter 4 about the saving work of God!

“5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

**7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;
8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”**

And as we heard in our epistle reading from Ephesians 4:

“we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—”

Man's works righteousness is the trickery of men and leads only to a rejection of the Bread of Life and a starvation of the soul now and eternally in hell.

But Jesus promises you and me all people:

“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

Never. Ever. Hunger or thirst!

You know a question is often asked, “Is the gold medal that the athletes receive made out of real gold?” Well, truth be told, it’s made of 92% pure silver and gold plated. For these Paris Olympics, they even embedded in the middle of them a piece of iron from the Eiffel Tower that was saved when they did some remodeling of it.

So, no, it’s not pure gold. And even it was, it still is along with everything in this world, perishable. Jesus tells us not to seek after the perishable but what He offers – His imperishable life for the life of all people. Eat this Bread by faith and you will live forever! For embedded in this Bread is Jesus complete forgiveness and salvation which He worked for and won by His death on the cross. He stood on the podium of the resurrection in all glory, having achieved the gold medal that doesn’t ever perish! And He graciously gives His work to you that you may join team Jesus through faith in Him as our epistle gloriously proclaims!

“just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:4-6

Amen.

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)