

12th Sunday after Pentecost  
“The Eternal Life-Giving Bread for all people – Jesus Christ” John 6:47-51  
August 11, 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 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, John 6:47-51

**“47 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”**

So far our text.

As we come to the close of the Olympic games, we have seen the athletes who have made a name for themselves and the ones who have fallen short of their goals. On the one hand, the victors get a heroes' welcome and a name on the Wheaties box.

Well, for Noah Lyles who won the gold medal in the 100 meter race, he was not shy about his plans. After winning the 100 meters at the Paris Olympics, he promptly declared what he wanted the most as the newly anointed Fastest Man Alive.

“I want my own shoe,” he said. “I want my own trainer. I’m dead serious. I want a sneaker. There ain’t no money in spikes, there’s money in sneakers. I feel like for how many medals we bring back and the notoriety we get, the fact that hasn’t happened, that’s crazy for me. I feel like that needs to happen.”

“Few outside of gymnastics had ever heard of Stephen Nedoroscik before the Paris Games. After helping the U.S. men to their first team competition medal in 16 years, the bespectacled "Pommel Horse Guy" should have eyeglass maker Warby Parker banging on his door.”

Athletes come to the Olympics seeking gold medals, but for some, there are more lucrative prizes at stake. The two-week competition provides a global stage for competitors to be noticed and potentially cash in and extend their 15 minutes of fame.

But on the other hand, anyone who didn't win a medal, isn't really talked about, and their names fall into obscurity. That is...until with renewed effort they come back in four years and accomplish what they couldn't in these games.

Did you have any favorites that you wanted to see do well? In our Gospel reading, we hear Jesus speaking of the greatest of all prizes that there is, don't we? What does He keep repeating? A shoe deal? What does Jesus keep before the eyes of the people, our eyes...as the greatest of all goals? Eternal life! The crown that doesn't perish!

**51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever;**

Anyone! Jesus plays no favorites! He wants all people to have eternal life! Anyone...it's what we call an indefinite pronoun. It's an open-ended pronoun. No limits. And Jesus uses two more indefinite pronouns as He spoke to the people. Did you hear them? He said, "No one" and "Everyone".

Who are the anyones, no ones, and everyones? They are you and me and every person who has ever lived.

Jesus is very clear that anyone who eats of Him, through faith in Him, the Living Bread, will live forever!

Yet, at the same time Jesus says, **"44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."**

It's impossible for anyone of us to come to the Father on our own. We can't gain our salvation and eternal life by our own works or merits. We can't approach the Holy God as sinful creatures that we are. Adam and Eve immediately hid from God didn't they, after they had disobeyed Him?

Jesus said the Jews **"49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die."**

No one can escape death by eating physical bread. In the previous chapter in John 5, we hear of the pool of Bethesda.

**“2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.”**

Possibly, Ponce de Leon was inspired to search for the Fountain of Youth based on this reading. “The city of St. Augustine, Florida, is home to the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park, a tribute to the spot where Ponce de León was supposed to have landed according to promotional literature, although there is no historical or archaeological evidence to support the claim.”

But, we don’t have to search for a special pool to have our ailments healed. Jesus tells us in our Gospel reading these words:

**“45 It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.**

By the teaching of the Word of God, everyone who hears it and learns it comes to Jesus. The Word of God is the fountain of life that teaches us what God has done for us in Jesus Christ! He is more than the Son of Mary and Joseph! He is true God descended from heaven who died and rose from the dead! The Firstborn from the dead! Everyone who hears God’s Word and believes will also rise again on the last day!

Jesus is quoting Isaiah 54:

**“13 All your children shall be taught by the Lord,  
And great shall be the peace of your children.  
14 In righteousness you shall be established;  
You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear;  
And from terror, for it shall not come near you.”**

God's Word teaches that everyone taught by the Lord shall be established in the righteousness of God. Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner through faith. And where there is Christ's righteousness, there is great peace! There is no fear, and no terror of death will come near you!

How beautiful is our bulletin cover artwork which pictures Jesus in the midst of the children. For Jesus loves all, big and small! As we heard in our introit from Psalm 34: **"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him."**

Blessed is the man, any man...it's indefinite! Taste the Bread of Life! Eat of Him through faith in Him and see how good He is! He is so good that He who eats of Jesus is called a saint...holy by the work of Jesus the Savior. **"47 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life."**

Most assuredly, truly truly...Jesus' words are to be trusted 100% for He is God and God never lies. Jesus tells us that "he who believes", anyone who believes in Him, has everlasting life. When? Right now! It's yours! It's your possession which no one can take away from you. You can be 100% sure that on the last day, Jesus will raise you up unto eternal life!

The American runner, Noah Lyles, who won the 100 meter race, also competed in the 200 meter race. To win both of them, cements one as the fastest person alive. Very few people have achieved this feat. Usain Bolt was the last to do this. Everyone expected Noah to also go down in history. Except there was a problem. Noah contracted Covid and his body was not 100% when he ran the 200 meter race. He did not come near being first and actually needed medical treatment after the race.

As strong and fast as the greatest of athletes are, how quickly we see they are weak like the rest of us. They are prone to illness and injury and eventually death.

But, the Lord has conquered all of our sicknesses and death itself, by doing the will of His Father – giving His life for the life of the world. And anyone, yes anyone who hears Jesus' invitation to eat of Him, believe in Him receives the greatest of all promises – eternal life! **Amen.**

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