

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY

4th August Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 187 347 395 510

INTROIT: Psalm 145:10-21

All whom You have made will praise You, O LORD. Your devout people will bless You.

They will talk about the glory of Your kingdom and speak about Your power, to make known to the descendants of Adam the mighty things that He has done and the glorious grandeur of His kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The LORD is faithful in all His works and gracious in all His deeds.

The LORD supports all those who are falling. He raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food at the right time.

You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

The LORD is righteous in all His Ways and faithful in everything that He does.

The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He does whatever those who fear Him desire. He hears their cry and saves them.

The LORD watches over all who love Him but will destroy all wicked people.

My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD. Let every living creature bless His holy name for ever and ever!

COLLECT:

Gracious Father, Your blessed Son came down from heaven to be the true bread, which gives life to the world. Grant that Christ, the bread of life, may live in us and we in Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com. Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.

READINGS: Exodus 16:2-15 The LORD sends the Israelites manna and quails.
Ephesians 4:1-16 The unity of the church, and Christ's gift of the ministry, that the
church might grow in love.
John 6:22-35 Jesus the bread of God gives life to the world.

Exodus 16:2-15

² The whole congregation of the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The Israelites said to them: "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt! Then we sat around the pots of meat and ate all the food that we wanted! However, You have brought us into this wilderness to starve this whole assembly to death!"

⁴ Then the LORD told Moses: "Look! I shall rain bread down from heaven for you. Then each day the people shall go out and gather a daily quantity for that day, that I may test them, to see whether they will live according to My Instructions or not! ⁵ However, on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it shall be twice as much as they gather on every other day!"

⁶ So, Moses and Aaron spoke to all the Israelites: "In the evening, you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt ⁷ and in the morning, you will see the glory of the LORD. For He has heard your grumbling against the LORD. Who are we, that you are grumbling against us?" ⁸ Moses also said: "You will know this when He gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you need to satisfy yourselves in the morning. For the LORD has heard your grumbling against Him. Who are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD."

⁹ Then Moses told Aaron: "Tell the whole congregation of the Israelites: 'Come near before the LORD! For He has heard your grumbling.'"

¹⁰ While Aaron was speaking to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they turned toward the wilderness, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. ¹¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, ¹² "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight, you will eat meat, and, in the morning, you will have all the bread you need to satisfy you! Then you will know that I am the LORD, your God.'"

¹³ That evening quails came up and settled over the camp, and the next morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the layer of dew evaporated, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was something fine and scale-like, as fine as frost, on the ground. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, "What is that?"

For they did not know what it was. Moses told them: "That is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

Ephesians 4:1-16

¹ As a prisoner in the Lord, I urge you to live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called. ² Be humble and gentle in every way, be patient and bear with one another in a loving way! ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace! ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit — just as God has called you to one hope — ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all. ⁷ However, grace has been given to each one of us as Christ, who has given it, has measured it out. ⁸ That is why the Scripture says, “When He **went up on high, He led many captives** and gave **gifts to people.**” ⁹ Now what can “He went up” mean except that He also had gone down to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who went down also “went up” above all the heavens, to fill everything. ¹¹ He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. ¹² His purpose was to prepare God’s holy people, to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all become one in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become mature, until we reach the full height of Christ. ¹⁴ His purpose was that we might not be babies any longer, tossed and driven by every doctrinal wind, by the trickery of people and by their clever and deceitful scheming to lead us astray. ¹⁵ Instead, His purpose is that, as we speak the truth with love, we may grow up into Him who is the Head, namely, Christ. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together and unites it by every ligament that supports it; and to the extent that each and every part is doing its work, He makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love.

John 6:22-35

²² The following day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been no other boat there except one and that Jesus had not gone into the boat with His disciples but that His disciples had gone away alone. ²³ Other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum, looking for Jesus. ²⁵ When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?” ²⁶ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, you are looking for Me, not because you have seen miraculous signs but because you have eaten the loaves of bread and had your fill. ²⁷ Stop working for the food that spoils but work for the food that remains for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you! For God, the Father, has set His seal on Him.”

28 Therefore, they asked Him, “What are we to do, that we may do the works of God?”

29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom He has sent.”

30 Therefore, they asked Him, “So, what miraculous sign are You going to perform? Let us see it, that we may believe You! What work are You going to do? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as Scripture has said: **‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’**”

32 Then Jesus told them, “Truly, truly, I tell 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 the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34 Therefore, they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread!”

35 Jesus told them, “I am the Bread of life. The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty.”

“WHAT ARE WE TO DO, THAT WE MAY DO THE WORKS OF GOD?”

Sermon for the 11th Sunday after Pentecost 2024

John 6:22-35

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before John 6:22-35:

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“What are we to do, that we may do the works of God?” That’s a great question, but it is easy to answer when we *understand* what is meant by “faith” and “work.” Today, the crowd asks Jesus, **“What are we to do, that we may do the works of God?”** and Jesus answers them, **“This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom He has sent.”** Jesus singles out one necessary work: faith in Him. But this is not something man can achieve by himself. Rather, it is God’s gift, and this is what Jesus sets out to explain today.

Jesus had just fed the 5,000, providing food for that huge crowd from just five loaves and two fish. The crowd thought that was great. They had full bellies, and the best part was that it had cost them *nothing*. They liked this free food. If Jesus was going to feed them whenever they were hungry, then they thought, *“Let’s make this Jesus our bread king!”* But it was obvious to Jesus that they were missing the point of the miracle.

“Perceiving then that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by Himself” (John 6:15). Jesus had not come to be a bread king or some political-economic worldly king, which is what they wanted. No, Jesus had something more important in mind.

Jesus and His disciples crossed over from where the miracle took place to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The people from the crowd were looking for Jesus and managed to track Him down. They came seeking Jesus, but not for the right reason. That’s where we pick up the story.

“When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?” Jesus replied, **“Truly, truly, I tell you, you are looking for Me, not because you have seen miraculous signs but because you have eaten the loaves of bread and had your fill.”**

Jesus’ miracles, especially in the Gospel of John, are called “signs,” and the thing about signs is that they are supposed to point you to something else. In this case, the “sign” of Jesus feeding the 5,000 was intended to point them to *something about who Jesus is and what He had come to do:* to see that Jesus is the divine Son of God come in the flesh and that He is ushering in the kingdom of God among them, a kingdom of blessing and abundance, providing for all of their needs, both physical and spiritual. The crowd should have realised that if Jesus could meet their physical needs in this obviously divine way, maybe they should take a closer look at who this Man was and listen carefully to what He had to say to them spiritually. He must be the Messiah prophesied so long ago. That would have been a true reading of the sign. But the crowd were not catching the meaning of the sign. Instead, they missed the point and the purpose of it. *They were only thinking of somebody who could give them plenty of food.* Jesus had to tell them, **“You are looking for Me, not because you have seen miraculous signs but because you have eaten the loaves of bread and had your fill.”**

Jesus then continues, **“Stop working for the food that spoils but work for the food that remains for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you!”**

People can eat only a certain amount of food, and they usually need less than they eat. What’s left eventually spoils. In the hot Mediterranean climate without modern refrigeration, food would not keep long at all. And that was the point - Jesus warned the people not to focus all their energies on getting **“the food that spoils,** but **“food that remains for eternal life.”** Jesus had food to give them, but not the kind they sought. His food remains for eternal life. He had come as the quintessential human being, the Son of Man, to give people eternal life. God had set His seal on the Son in His humanity by sending the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and speaking from heaven at Jesus’ baptism. Every miraculous sign had since echoed the Father’s approval. Jesus had eternal life to give, something only God can give. If only the crowd were as interested in that as they were in filling their bellies!

What about us? What are our top priorities? As Australians living in a free country, are we more interested in prosperity in worldly terms or in seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?¹ Even we Christians can sometimes act like *functional atheists*. That is, always seeking after other things and the concerns of this life while ignoring God's call to repentance and faith and following Jesus.

So Jesus calls the crowd's attention, and our attention, to what we should be seeing and seeking. He says of Himself, the Messianic Son of Man: **“For God, the Father, has set His seal on Him.”** All that Jesus has been doing - preaching repentance, teaching on the kingdom, healing the sick, doing signs of abundant provision, such as at the wedding at Cana and in the feeding of the 5,000 - all of these things were demonstrating that God the Father has set His seal, His seal of approval, on this man Jesus.

Well, the crowd begins to realise Jesus has something to say to them about God, so they ask Him, **“What are we to do, that we may do the works of God?”**

Their question betrays their mindset. They think in terms of *doing works to gain favour from God*. This is a works-righteousness mentality, assuming that we are capable of pleasing God through our own efforts as long as we know what to do, put our minds to it, and try really hard. If we're good enough people, we can get God on our side and receive good things from Him.

Jesus had to cure them of this commonly held yet mistaken notion. So, He takes their mention of “works” and turns it on its head, giving a completely different understanding than the “earning God's favour by one's doing of works” law concept they were labouring under. He tells them, **“This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom He has sent.”**

The people in the crowd said they wanted to do works that please God. Yet they were not recognising and receiving Jesus as the heaven-sent Saviour. That is what will please God. And that sort of “work” is not really a “work” in the sense that they were using the term. Faith in Christ is really *giving up on our own works as a means of salvation*. Faith in Christ is trusting in Jesus' work as the only work that will truly please God.

This is the teaching of Scripture throughout. Your own works will not save you. You could not do enough or pile up your work high enough to overcome and offset your sins. Jesus Himself taught this when He said, *“For I tell you, unless your righteousness is much better than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:20). You need a better kind of righteousness than you can generate. St. Paul teaches the same thing, most famously in Romans 3, where he says, *“Therefore, no human being will be justified in His sight by doing what the Law says. For through the Law comes the recognition of sin”* (3:20). In fact, just before our text in John 6, at the end of John 5, Jesus tells the Jews: *“Stop thinking that I shall accuse you before the Father! There is the one who is accusing you, Moses, in whom you have been hoping.”*

¹ Matthew 6:33

(5:45). If you are setting your hope of eternal life on your own works, on your own keeping of the Law, on your own goodness, you are looking in the wrong place. That won't cut it. Your works won't work.

The only work that will work is the work God does for us in Christ Jesus. **“This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom He has sent.”** Jesus is the One who has come down from heaven and gives life to the world. As the manna had come down from heaven and sustained the life of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, in an even greater way, the Son of God, Christ Jesus, has come down from heaven as the Bread of Life who gives life - real life, new life, eternal life - to all who trust in Him.

Trusting in Jesus to supply your greatest need - that is faith. It is the work that gives up on one's own works as the way to earn salvation. Only Christ's work on the cross does the job. He gives His flesh, and He sheds His blood for the life of the world. This is the only thing that will take away your sin. Christ's resurrection and His return on the Last Day to raise up your body - this is how you will have eternal life, and this gift is received through faith. Jesus says to you today: **“The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty.”** Jesus satisfies your deepest need. This is the only way you will live and not die. It is by receiving Christ through faith. **“The person who comes to Me,”** Jesus says, which is the same as saying, *“Whoever believes in Me.”*

Coming to Jesus for God's gift of eternal life - that is faith, and you would not be able to come to Jesus unless that, too, were a gift, which it is. *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws Him,”* Jesus says a little later in John 6. Not only is forgiveness a free gift but so is the faith that comes to Christ and receives that forgiveness. St. Paul writes: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, that no one may boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). You see, the whole thing is a gift, from start to finish, both the forgiveness and the faith. And this faith that is created in you is nurtured and strengthened through God's working in Word and Sacrament. The Holy Spirit uses these means of grace to do His faith-giving, faith-building work in you. That is why Luther is right when he begins his explanation of the Third Article by saying, *“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”*

Dear friends, nothing is more important than continuing to come to Jesus and be strengthened in faith through these Gospel means. We have been graciously given faith in Jesus our Saviour, by whose work on the cross you and I are fed with the bread of eternal life. As Jesus told the crowd, He tells us, **“I am the Bread of life. The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty.”** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Heavenly Father, we come before You in prayer and praise, confident that You will hear our cries; because You are full of compassion and pity, not easily angered, and show great love and faithfulness to every generation.

Bless the work of Your Holy Spirit among us through Your Word and Sacraments. Turn us away from sin in true repentance, and help us to look to Jesus for forgiveness and for daily grace to do what pleases You. Provide faithful preachers and teachers of Your truth in Your Church, and make Your people eager to hear and learn it. Fill us with love and trust in You. Save us in all the battles we must wage, and uphold us in all our needs.

Strengthen Christians throughout the world constantly to confess that Jesus is Lord, to Your glory. Empower them to proclaim that it is Jesus who rescues them from the punishment that they deserve for their sin. Give to each one of us all those gifts of the Spirit that are necessary for our witness to Christ. Fill us all with wisdom and joy to use those gifts for the good of all. Enable the light of the Gospel to penetrate the darkness of this world, so that people everywhere may rejoice in Your salvation.

May this Your house always be a house of prayer. Cleanse it of all unrighteousness, that it may be a place where Your glory dwells, Your name is hallowed, and Your Word is taught faithfully.

Keep the nations of the earth in peace. Turn people's hearts everywhere away from war, terrorism, and other wickedness. We pray, in particular, for those who are our country's leaders. Grant that our liberties may be kept safe, our laws upheld, injustice suppressed, and lawlessness punished. Bless all honest and useful work in industry, agriculture, education, science, the professions, and the arts. If you give us prosperity, let us never forget You.

May the words of our Lord Jesus be treasured daily in our homes, so that both young and old may grow in grace, and follow Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

If you cause us to pass through difficult times, grant that we may cling to Your mercy, and seek your gracious purposes in them. Look in mercy on the sick, the suffering, the poor, the bereaved, the handicapped, and the unemployed, and hear their cry. Bless them with Your powerful love, that they may turn to You, to praise Your holy name.

Hear and grant these and all other prayers, O Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and rules, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Article: Opening of the Olympics

I have to admit: I didn't watch the opening of the Olympic Games – it just doesn't interest me. Actually, I used to be an avid follower of sports, but these days, not so much. Sure, I like to hear cricket scores and how much the Broncos lost by (they'll begin winning again one day, I'm sure!), but I think too much money is involved in sport today and that has ruined it.

Anyhow, after hearing what happened at the opening of the Olympic Games with a “parody” of the Last Supper, with Jesus and the Apostles replaced by men in drag, I googled the opening and watched what went on. While I am not sure who in the Paris Olympic Committee thought this was a great idea, it went over like a lead balloon on social media. Let’s take a look.

Shameful Disrespect or Art?

I guess it depends on your perspective. I find “parodies” like the one forced on us extremely offensive and disrespectful. I personally believe that there was a clear intent to insult our Lord and all followers of Jesus as well as Church teaching. The organisers will disagree. But this isn’t the first time something like this has happened. I won’t dignify the “artists” by mentioning their work, but suffice it to say there was no respect or reverence in any of the other works. I am sure that some of the “artists” went down this path purposely to garner attention, and it was attention they got. All sorts of comments have been made on social media.

Although Christianity seems to be the number one target for mockery, it is not the only one. I think of the recent protests against Israel that we have seen here and abroad, including the phrase, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” Those protesting call for the complete destruction of Israel. I am not an expert in what is going on in the Middle East, but have you ever noticed that not one of these “artists” create art that disrespectfully depicts the Prophet Muhammed? Based on past history, this is due to the response from the Muslim community. *Fear can be an effective tool in controlling the narrative.*

Should We Care If These “Artists” Disrespect Jesus and Our Faith?

While I think it is fair and we should be expected to voice our concerns and make known our feelings about this disgusting event, as true followers of Jesus, we abide by His words in the Bible:

Matthew 5:11-12: Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you, because of Me! ¹² Rejoice and be very glad! For your reward in heaven is great. For in this way people persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 6: 35-36: Rather, love your enemies! Do good and lend, without expecting to get anything back! Then your reward will be great, and you will be the children of the Most High, because He is kind to ungrateful and wicked people. ³⁶ Be merciful, as your Father also is merciful!

Jesus was mocked and disrespected by many during His earthly ministry. Jesus never reacted or responded to the taunts or the verbal and physical abuse. Granted, scenes, as we saw in the Olympic Opening Ceremony, can be infuriating, but following Jesus is about peace, non-violence, and forgiveness. Jesus asks us to trust Him to address those who wrong us because of our beliefs. Remember, following Jesus is not easy, so let this be a time that we try and get closer to God by following Jesus’ words and actions.

Children's Message:

How many of you have ever gone on a long car ride - maybe travelling to visit family or to go somewhere fun for a holiday? In order to prepare for the long car ride, what did you pack? Do you pack games to play, books to read, or something to eat? How many of you pack snacks like chips or lollies?

In today's First Reading, we heard how the children of Israel set out on a long journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. However, they had a problem: they didn't have enough time to pack properly. The Bible tells us that they had to leave fast - and they didn't have enough time to pack enough food for the long journey! But it was time to go, and there was no looking back. So off into the wilderness the children of Israel went. Before long, they were running out of water and food! How do you think you'd feel if you were really hungry on your car ride and your parents forgot to pack snacks and drinks?

But do you know what God did for them? He gave them bread. This was no ordinary bread. This bread came down at night and covered the ground; there was enough for everybody. And it was delicious. The Bible tells us it was light and a little crunchy and sweet like honey. Everybody ate the bread, and they were happy. God knew they were going to need this bread every day on their journey to the Promised Land. So do you know what God did? He provided enough of this bread every day for the next forty years!



Did you know that God gives to us a very special bread every single day? That bread is there for us every day when we wake up and when we go to sleep. Do any of you know what that bread may be? In our Gospel, Jesus tells us *“I am the Bread of life. The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty”* (John 6:35). We can receive Jesus every day when we open our Bibles and read about Jesus. We can receive Jesus, the Bread of Life, every single time we come to church! Like the bread that the Israelites ate in the desert, unlike the snacks we eat on a long car ride, Jesus' love for us never ever runs out!

Thank You Jesus for being my Bread of Life. May I always feed on You! Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

11 August 12 Pentecost	18 August 13 Pentecost	25 August 14 Pentecost
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.30am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD LR
Sunday, 11 August		
READINGS: 1 Kings 19:1-8; Ephesians 4:17-5:2; John 6:35-51		
HYMNS: 308 771 530 (289 290) 451		
Sunday, 18 August		
READINGS: Proverbs 9:1-10; Ephesians 5:6-21; John 6:51-69		
HYMNS: 499 357 364 (839 291) 416		
Sunday, 25 August		
READINGS: Isaiah 29:11-19; Ephesians 5:22-33; Mark 7:1-13		
HYMNS: 464 259 266 152		

Wednesday, August 7, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Bethlehem Toowoomba. *Opening devotion:* Helen. Choose a Bible verse from Numbers 33-36. *Item of Interest:* Something green.

Saturday, August 10, 1.00pm. Fellowship afternoon at Naomi's home, Toowoomba. All are welcome to attend. Please bring something for a shared afternoon tea.

Pastor is taking holidays from August 19 to September 2. If there is an emergency during this time, please contact your elders.