

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you were here last week, you heard us speaking in the same section of John about Jesus, and this is following after the section about him feeding the 5,000 men with the five loaves of bread and two fish. And we've been reading through this section of John for quite a while now, focusing upon Jesus Christ as the bread of life. And comparing it to... Especially Jesus is comparing it to the bread that was given to the people of Israel in the wilderness, the manna, that thin wafer that they survived on while they were wandering in the wilderness. He says, "Yeah, they ate that bread, that manna, but yet they still died." It only sustained this life in the here and now. The bread that I am talking about is the bread of eternal life.

The bread that will sustain you and give you life, not just here and now, and not physical life, but spiritual life. Spiritual life that will give you life eternal even after you die. A life where your body and soul will continue on in the new heaven and the new Earth with God for all eternity. That is the bread that he is offering to us. And so everybody was struggling to try and figure out what in the world this was. They were grumbling. They said, "How can he be the bread of life? He's the son of Joseph. We know him. We know his mom and dad." They didn't understand, they didn't grasp the concept that this was much larger than the event of the day. It was much larger than the miracle. And it was a tremendous miracle of feeding all those people with just a few loaves of bread and a few fish.

That was a sign of what... Just a small portion of the authority and the might and the power that God had. He has the ability to give us all that we need. He has the ability to give us this bread which nourishes us under salvation. And yet we still worry and yet we still fret. And yet we still hold onto those things in our lives which we think we need desperately. We get angry when somebody does us unfairly. We get anxious because we think we need to solve the problems. We get angry because their people are doing wrong against us in particular, and we feel like we need to solve it by holding onto that anger. We don't understand what God means when he says he gives us bread. It means that we can let go of the anger. We can let go of the frustration.

We can let go of the fear and the anxiety that this life gives to us because he promises us everything. Now, if we want a perfect example in the Old Testament of someone who saw the fullness of God and still had questions, we go to the Old Testament of Elijah, which is I... This is an amazing story. Elijah one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. I mean, he got carried into heaven by a chariot of fire. God saw him as one of his primary spokespersons in the entire Old Testament. And this reading that we have immediately follows the whole battle between God and Baal on the mountaintop with Elijah as the sole prophet of God and 450 priests of Baal. And they were on the mountain trying to prove who was

the real God. And so they built two altars. They put the stone and they put the wood on the altars.

They put the sacrifice on the altars. And then they said, "Okay, whichever God is real, they'll light the fire." And so the prophets of Baal, they spent all their time and doing all sorts of crazy things, cutting themselves and screaming and yelling. And during this time, Elijah is mocking them the whole time, "Maybe you need to speak louder. Maybe he's in the bathroom and he's indisposed right now." I mean literally it's what he said.

"He's in the bathroom. Maybe you just need wait until he is done and then he'll come. Or maybe he's asleep. If you just yell harder, you might wake him up."

This is what Elijah is doing while they're doing all their crazy stuff. And of course nothing happens. And then Elijah, it's his turn and he has them pour what little water is left in the land, pour it over the altar. So there's no question, no doubt who's doing the work here. And all he basically says is God be glorified. And lightning comes down from heaven, burns the sacrifice, burns the wood, burns the stones, licks up all the water in the ground behind it and everything is dry. There's nothing left. And of course, all the Israelites go, "You know what? We're worshiping him. Yeah, that's who we believe in."

And so they killed all the prophets of Baal. And so this is the result. This is what happens afterwards. Elijah, he's the one who called upon God, who trusted God to demonstrate his power and authority. And then Jezebel, the queen says, "I'm going to kill you tomorrow." And what does he Elijah do? He runs away in fear. What is going on with him? Did he not just see the miracle that God performed just that very same day? And yet even after seeing that, even after witnessing that, even after being confident that he would do that, he still gets afraid for his own life. He still runs away in fear. And as much as I think, how could Elijah do such a foolish thing, I have to look at my own life and think, how many times has God worked through chaotic times in my life and in your life? How many times have you thought there's no way where I'm getting out of this. There's no solution to this problem. I don't know how I'm going to make it through. And yet somehow we do. How many times have we gone through hardship and trial? And God has miraculously given us the strength that we need to make it through. How many times have we been despondent? And somehow a friend will come up and say exactly the right words that we need to hear, or we open up our portals of prayer and it speaks exactly to what we were dealing with that very same day. Or the pastor preaches a sermon and we're going, "Wait a second. Were you listening to me last night in the living room?" That's happened a few times as well. And no, I'm not. But God has a way of using myself and his word to communicate his word of comfort and peace to all of us when we need it the most. And yet, and yet, how

many times do we still worry and fret? How many times are we more concerned about our own self-interest than we are about serving God?

How many times are we anxious? I mean, this whole world tells us that we need to make sure we get what we need and make sure we are comfortable and we are well taken care of. I mean, that's kind of what the focus of society is and we... But how many people who are concerned about their well-being and or hyper focused on what they need, how many of them are at peace? How many times are you worried about your finances or worried about your life or relationships or that foolish man down the street that you just get angry with every single day? Because he does the same stupid thing every single time.

How many times do we focus on the negative of this world and the negative of our life and we hold onto that bitterly almost? And what does God say? Be angry but do not sin. What does that mean? How do you get angry and not sin? The idea is get angry at the things that God's angry at and nothing else. So the irritant down the road that you're angry with all the time, has God died to forgive them? Yes. Has God died to forgive you? Yes. Because you also did some very stupid and foolish things as well.

In other words, God has forgiven them and he has forgiven you. So what right do you have to hold onto your anger? You're basically saying, "God, you don't know. You don't know the trouble that I've seen. You don't know the frustration that I'm having. I need to be angry. I have a right to be angry."

And God says, "Don't be angry. Don't let the sun go down on your anger."

Why? Because I've given you the bread of life, because I've given you salvation. I've given you everything you need. You don't need to be angry because I will take care of you. And I'm with you. You don't need to be anxious and worried about what's going to happen next because I have given you the bread of life. I am the bread of life for you, and it will nourish you and strengthen you, and you can make it through today.

You can be focused upon serving me, hearing my word, and growing in your faith. And you don't need to worry about your frustrations, your anger. You don't need to be worried about your own comfort. You don't need to make sure you get yours first before anything else happens. You can walk in faith and peace. I don't know about you, but have you ever met someone who no matter what goes on in their world, they just seem to have a serenity about them? That goes beyond anything that they're actually experiencing. My grandma was kind of like that. No matter what happened to her, she was always cheerful. She always thanked God for her life no matter what was going on. And I long to be like that. I mean, can you really complain and whine and get frustrated when you're praising God?

Scripture says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice." If you're rejoicing, do you have time to complain? If you're rejoicing, do you have time to be worried? If you're rejoicing, do you have time to be angry? God wants us to rejoice. God wants us to be at peace and He's given us what we need to be that way. His bread of life, his son, Jesus Christ, his word given to us in the body and blood, in the Lord's Supper, but also in the word that he gives us in the scriptures, in the word that is preached on Sunday morning, in the word in our devotionals. His word gives us joy, peace, forgiveness along with patience and self-control and all the others that go along with it. Those are gifts that come with the bread of life. That is what is yours because you are his child.

If that is all yours, don't worry. Don't fret, don't get angry, but trust him and walk in peace because he will be with you and he will provide what you need, including all the way through from this life into the next. There's nothing to be afraid of. There's nothing that he doesn't know that you need. There's no experience that you are facing that he has not been able to deal with in the past and will continue to deal with in the future. So if all of that is true, trust this bread to nourish you and to strengthen you through all the trials of life.

Because if he can feed 5,000 with five loaves, and that's a simple thing for him, he can certainly do so much more than we could possibly even imagine. That's really what we're talking about here. Elijah lost sight of that and got afraid, but God came to him and nourished him again and built him back up so that he might be able to serve once more. You and I have the same gift given to us. He nourishes us and he feeds us with spiritual food for our life in this world and our life in the next. And he does it all because He loves us. Not because we deserve it, but because he loves us. So let us trust the love of our Father for his dear children. You and me. May his grace and his mercy and his peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.