

# Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

01.08.2021  
By Alex Wimberly

## Introduction

At the root of a lot of anxiety are basic questions. Am I loved? Am I safe? Who's in charge? As we enter into situations with conflict, it's good to note how those basic questions are at play -- and how we ourselves might be adding to the anxiety of a situation by letting fears crowd out the good news of undying love.

Before we turn to the text of Jesus as the Bread of Life, we take a moment to breathe, to notice our mood, to note what we continue to be hungry for, and to prepare our hearts and minds for a story about what endures.

---

## Text

### John 6: 24–35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he

has sent.” So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

---

## Comment

The conflict at the heart of this passage is the reality that things don’t last. Our prayerful request for ‘daily bread’ and our desire for ‘the bread of life’ is not just about God’s continual provision — but also about our perpetual lack. The human story always includes the questions: will we make it? Will we have enough? What am I supposed to do? What can we do to remove this consistent anxiety?

‘You’re here because of the bread,’ Jesus says to the crowd, ‘the food that endures.’ Indeed. The people gathered want more and assume they have to do something to get another round. Jesus explains it’s not about doing anything; it’s about believing in the one sent by God. Ok, they respond: then what’s the process for believing? Do something to convince us.

The crowd explains to Jesus the sort of transaction they have in mind. Like Moses did for their ancestors, they want a sign like manna in the wilderness. But Jesus is less interested in transactional works. Faith isn’t a decision to reach; nor is God’s provision conditional on the right action. It just is. And always will be. Believe it. Receive it. Accept the good news of God’s love.

‘I am the bread of life,’ Jesus says as part of the declarative/revelatory ‘I am’ statements in John. To have this ‘bread always’ is to have confidence that even if we don’t store up extra goods from yesterday; even if don’t know what tomorrow will bring — the acceptance of the good news of God’s undying love will be enough to see us through.

How much of our conflict arises from our anxiety about tomorrow? What fights happening today are about finding securing for tomorrow? What if we simply trusted that life will be and that we will be okay?

As Jesus suggests by personifying ‘living bread,’ a faith in transactional agreements

will continue to lead to daily anxiety. But having faith in our relationship with life— in a God who is living, who is Life and whose love is undying -- provides a more enduring and less fleeting satisfaction.

---

## Response

One of the revelations of the pandemic has been the reminder that certain things are essential: food, water, shelter, healthcare. But also compassion. And empathy. And the humility to realise that our own well being is tied up with the well being of others.

Some essential things don't last and will need to be replaced regularly (food, water, shelter, medicine). But in response to our passage about Living Bread and its enduring satisfaction, perhaps we can assign even greater value to the essential things that do manage to last. Faith. Hope. Love.

In noting the endless reservoir of love and compassion we receive from God, if not from ourselves, we can find ourselves less anxious and more able to face the daily challenge of securing today's bread with greater confidence.

---

## Prayer

God of what endures,  
in living day to day  
we calculate the costs  
of giving and receiving.  
May our relationship with you  
mean a relationship with  
eternal and enduring life:  
one that lets us meet each day  
with gratitude, not anxiety;  
and helps us meet with others  
without the fear of running out.  
Amen.

