

Sermon on **John 6:24-35** for the 12th Sunday after Pentecost
St. Paul's Lutheran Church – New Ulm, MN – Pastor N. Scharf

What is the best way to communicate with someone? Would it be best to reach someone by calling them? Should I text them? Voice to text with all its autocorrects and errors might work. Maybe I should use email. Can I still send a telegram to someone? How about face to face? It may not always be easiest, but often times it is the clearest, quickest, most impactful way to communicate. You can read body language. You can focus on what is said and how it is said – inflection, volume, emotion. God loved the people of this world and wanted them to know and believe in him for their salvation, trust in him as the only God, escape hell and damnation, and live eternally with him in heaven. So he sent his Son to win their salvation, earn it all for them, so that through faith in him and him alone, they would have this forgiveness and eternal life. He sent his Son to communicate face to face.

Jesus communicates certainty.

- 1) Certainty that Jesus is true God and the Savior God promised.**
- 2) Certainty that we are saved by God's gift through Jesus alone.**

John 6:24-35 Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So they asked him, "What sign will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Why were they there? They had seen Jesus feed the 5000 with five small barley loaves and a couple small fish. The people wanted to make him King for it – free meal, and a teaching side show to boot! He knew they wanted more free food, and to keep him and God's will for them at arm's length. Jesus had showed he cared for their bellies by filling them with fish and bread. God does this for all people daily. But God had a greater gift to give them, an eternal gift. He gives them himself. Jesus, face to face, knows they don't want it. They don't want him. He is the bread which does not spoil. All their efforts shouldn't be in finding the next free meal, but in listening to him, trusting and believing in him. His miracles proved it. His message proclaimed it. **Jesus communicated certainty that he is true God and the Savior God promised.** But that's not why they were there.

They dig in their heels. They realize what he is getting at and they want Jesus to know they have God figured out without his help. They are doing what you need to do to be right with him. This is the sinful nature's trick – keep God at arm's length and yet hold on to the lie in our hearts that we are good enough or can do enough – we can check the boxes and to be right with God. They drink in, "You be you," or "Be true to yourself," the age old lie that whatever you need now or for whatever comes next you can find or conjure up within yourself. While a Christian might interpret these catch phrases in ok way, these people show the world does not care whether it's sin against God or not, as long as it seems to fulfill. What a lie! They ask, "*What must we do to do the works God requires?*" What boxes do we have left to check – magic man?

Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." Jesus crushes their pride and their self-righteous, works-righteous thought that they are good enough to achieve or

do it themselves. It's not the *works* God requires, but it is the *work* God does and only God's work that can save them – it's faith, a gift of God so that no one can boast, as they believe in the one God sent – Jesus, who was standing before them face to face – their only way out, the only answer to their problems the only one who can fill the void in their hearts and lives, but they seemed to have lost their taste for him.

Why are we here? What led our feet through the thresholds of St. Paul's? Is it the box we needed to check this week to be a fine upstanding New Ulmian? Is it part of the price we pay to have our kids in a good school or to be taught morality? Is it just something we've always done and it's a part of our routine? Is it a nod to God for ourselves or our family to show that he's a part of our lives even if he isn't first in our lives? Is it just another insurance we have as we focus on our lives here. These sinful thoughts have invaded our hearts too, but this cannot be, no not for you and me. Jesus shows us we are here because Jesus is here and comes to us face to face with us through his Word and Sacraments. We are here because God so loved sinners like you and me, even a world full of them, that he gave his one and only Son.

Jesus did exactly what his Father sent him to do. He proved himself true God in the flesh by his teaching, by his miracles, by his perfect life. He found perfect fulfillment in God the Father, in his will for him, in his Word. Even when called upon to pay the bill of our eternal debt of sin, shame and deserved hell, Jesus did not hesitate but put his life and soul in the hands of his father and went to the cross, communicating all the way forgiveness for the sinner and certainty of heaven for the believer – even a thief on the cross. He died for you. He died for me. And he rose from the grave for your sake, to the glory of his father, that you might know with **certainty that your Jesus is true God and the Savior God promised. And that you might know with certainty that you are saved by God's gift through Jesus alone.**

"So they asked him, "What sign will you give us that we may see it and believe in you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" It is astounding the lengths our sinful natures will go to in order to reject Jesus or keep us away from him. They downplayed the feeding of the 5000 and the miracles Jesus did as one shot wonders compared with their Moses who delivered God's laws and gave them manna each day for forty years. Jesus set them straight, *"Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* *"Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."* *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

Moses didn't give them the bread or quail or water from a rock. It was Jesus who did that! And you know what, it was never about the bread! It was about them trusting God, turning from idols, following him and his will for them, knowing the love and faithfulness of God and in that great joy and peace living that out in their daily lives. Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life."* If you eat him, which means believing in him, trusting in him, you have everything you need now and eternally. It is not something you do, choose, or attain. Find him in the Word as you hear it, read it, study it, in the sacraments as you remember your baptism and bring others, as you receive Christ's body and blood with the bread and the wine and forgiveness in the Lord's Supper. **Jesus gives you certainty that you are saved by God's gift through him alone.**

How will we communicate this certain peace and fulfillment we have been given in Jesus? Communicate him in how you live, face to face. In the choices you make, the conversations you have, the work, play, help you give to others. Like Jesus with his Father. Trust your Father in heaven, and his will for you and your life, and follow his Word with all your heart. Why are we here face to face with our Savior Jesus? It's God's grace to communicate and give you certainty, certainty that **Jesus is true God and the Savior God promised, certainty you are saved by God's gift through Jesus alone.** Amen.