

If someone or something is “the greatest thing since sliced bread,” you know it’s got to be good. Wonder bread celebrates 100 years of existence this year. First sold in 1921, it is the original sliced bread that was so lauded and admired.

Today, Wonder Bread isn’t so wonderful. There has been an increased skepticism of food with preservatives, and people shell out the big bucks for words like whole wheat, multigrain, and even artisanal—whatever artisanal means. We the people have said no to chemicals like high fructose corn syrup, Sodium Stearoyl Lactylate, and Calcium Propionate.

We’re on week two of three of our sermon series in John 6. Last week we learned that Jesus, the Bread of Life, directs our attention to more than just bread and circuses. Not that food and entertainment is bad: God is the provider of those daily needs. But the Bread of Life shows us that not only do we need food and entertainment, but we live for something more.

Today we’ll continue talking about Jesus, the Bread of Life, but we’ll focus on who this Bread of Life is, and what He does. And today we’ll learn that **THE BREAD OF LIFE CONTAINS PRESERVATIVES**. We’ll find that this Bread of Life is much greater than sliced bread. We’ll find that *this* Wonder bread contains preservatives, but not the chemical kind that may give you cancer, rather, the kind that will preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting.

First, I. The Father wants to preserve your life. Jesus makes this clear in His words from John 6, “**And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.**”

Humanity is destined for eternity. What our Heavenly Father wants is us to have eternal life in heaven, not eternal death in hell. He wants to grant to us eternal glory, not everlasting shame. He wants to preserve us, not let us perish. Nobody likes moldy bread; our Heavenly Father does not want our souls to grow moldy from unbelief and sin.

When I was in seminary, the seminary offered a food co-op to help feed the students. Essentially you could trade in volunteering hours for points that could pay for food in the food pantry. Being a high and mighty fourth year, I got the coveted volunteer position of the bread run. I was on one of the four teams that would do the weekly bread run. Once a month on a Saturday you and a partner would wake up at the crack of dawn and drive to a bakery to pick up an entire trunk load of recently expired baked goods: cookies, donuts, and bread, things for which you would pay a premium in the store. It was our job to unload the baked goods and set them down in the co-op for the students to pick up throughout the week. It was a win-win, the bakery got a tax write off, and the poor seminarians got as much gluten as their hearts desired.

The seminary community got access to beautiful, artisanal, and free bread from this bakery. Did I mention it was free? No preservatives here, thank you very much. But what was the catch? No preservatives. We picked up the bread Saturday and by Wednesday we were cultivating penicillin. Saturday through Tuesday we were living as kings, but by Wednesday we were crawling back to Wonder Bread and its store-bought cousins because that had the real staying power.

Our spirituality is kind of like that. We make great promises at baptism and confirmation, but we break those vows every time we sin. We come back from the youth conference or the Christian retreat with a spiritual glow and grand plans. Monday morning rolls around and we go back into our old habits, old vices, and same old problems. We receive forgiveness, life, and salvation in church on Sunday, but Saturday night rolls around and we've grown a bit moldy in our walk with Jesus.

And so we see the Jews in John 6 are grumbling about Jesus' sayings. Later on we'll see that even some of Jesus' disciples grumble and leave Jesus due to his hard teachings. If you're not careful, the spores of unbelief will take root in your soul and start to grow. You can hear the words of Jesus and grumble and complain like seminary students tossing out moldy, week old bread.

But the Lord wants to preserve you from this. Luckily for you, **THE BREAD OF LIFE CONTAINS PRESERVATIVES. II. Jesus is the Bread of Life.** Jesus says, **“Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.”**

Jesus is the Bread of *life*, and I want to really drill down into the “life” part. As God in the flesh, He is the author of life. The Son of God was there at the beginning of time at the creation. He created the animals and plants, and He formed Adam from the dust. Jesus is the picture of eternal life. He is life itself.

Jesus, the Bread of *Life* resists all attempts to kill Him. He cannot be corrupted by sin. He does not stoop to the level of His enemies by grumbling back at them. Jesus is evergreen. The mold of sin cannot grasp Him. His teachings never grow stale.

Yet the Gospels really test this theory. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh tried their best to have this Bread of Life see decay. The enemies of Jesus sought to trap Him in sin, tangling Him up in a false teaching or contradiction of the truth. When that didn't work, they tried to spoil His ministry by falsely accusing Him and sentencing Him to death. Our sins clung onto the Bread of Life and sought to destroy Him just as vermin, mold, and bacteria seeks to spoil last week's bread.

“It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’” Jesus quotes Isaiah 54 in our text today. Isaiah 54 is a hymn of praise which

follows one of the most gruesome passages in the entire Old Testament. Isaiah describes the coming Savior writing in 52:14, “**his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind**—” Picture the most disgusting piece of spoiled food you’ve ever seen. Something someone couldn’t pay you a million bucks to eat. In the crucifixion that’s what the devil, the world, and our sins made the Bread of Life out to be: marred beyond all human semblance. Jesus died and was tossed out like Wednesday’s moldy bread from the co-op.

But THE BREAD OF LIFE CONTAINS PRESERVATIVES. After all, Jesus is the Bread of *Life*. It was a trap all along. The Bread of Life cannot mold or grow old. He Himself is life! Sin, death, and the devil which clung to the Bread of Life were defeated. Jesus forgave sin like Calcium Propionate prevents mold. Jesus snapped death’s neck like a mouse caught in a trap. Jesus zapped the devil like a moth that flies into the fire.

This is not some theoretical sin, death, or devil that Jesus defeated and overcame. This is your sin that He eradicated. This is your death that He has overcome. This is your devil with his constant temptations, taunts, and trials that Jesus has banished. This Bread of Life is hardy—strong to save.

And III. The Bread of Life preserves our life. And so Jesus in our text from John 6 gives us the key to eternal life: to believe in Him. Belief in Jesus is not simply an acknowledgment of the mind, it is a trust in Him. One of the key words of John’s Gospel is to abide in Jesus. That is what trust is. See your sins in that old, moldy loaf of death upon the cross, yet know that THE BREAD OF LIFE CONTAINS PRESERVATIVES and that your place is in the pristine, multigrain, artisanal loaf that is the resurrected, perfected Christ.

So it is necessary for Christians who are called to eternal life to hold fast to the Bread of Life’s words of eternal life. We gather together to read, mark, and inwardly digest God’s Holy Word which contains the preservatives for eternal life. This Word is no idle tale or useless knowledge, but it reminds you that you are but one grain of wheat ground up and lodged into the Bread of Life. You have a place in the body of Christ, and the Father wants you to live eternally.

Likewise, the Lord’s Supper Preserves our faith. What blessing does the pastor say after communion? “The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting.” The Lutheran Church contends that Communion strengthens and preserves faith. Perhaps this dictum proves true: you are what you eat. And those who partake of Christ’s body and blood in the communion meal partake of the Bread of Life, and that BREAD OF LIFE CONTAINS PRESERVATIVES. No, not the kind that give you cancer, but the kind that preserves your body and soul to life everlasting.