

“All You Need” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 11 – August 4, 2024

- I. **John 6:35** – Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.”
- II. **I am a big fan of the Olympic Games...**
 - a. Whether winter or summer, I try to keep up on the individual athletes, the countries, and the sports that are represented.
 - b. The human interest stories can be very encouraging, especially when the athlete comes through a difficult trial to get to the Olympics.
 - c. As I watched the last week of competition, several stories came up about the challenges these world-class athletes face in their own heads.
 - i. Simone Biles the gymnast came back from a major mental health trial when she pulled out of the prior Olympics in Tokyo.
 - ii. Noah Lyles the sprinter dealt with depression.
 - iii. Caeleb Dressel the swimmer’s story was compelling... because he won 5 gold medals in the Tokyo Olympics and still struggled afterwards.
 1. He tried to look happy and celebrate, but underneath the façade was a deeply critical voice that he could have done better... set more records... given a better performance.
 - iv. Michael Phelps has more medals than any other Olympian, but he was in a documentary called “The Weight of Gold”.
 1. He was depressed after winning it all.
 2. Everything he did in life from childhood revolved around swimming and winning every race possible.
 3. Interviewing multiple Olympians about post-Olympic depression, Phelps said, “We’re just so lost. A good 80 percent, maybe more, develop a post-Olympic depression. I thought of myself as just a swimmer, and not a human being, and that’s where I thought, why don’t I just end it all?”¹
 - v. The Olympics are an extreme example of placing a high value on winning a medal – with thousands of hours of commitment from the athlete... and their families.
 1. The interesting thing for many of these athletes is they don’t find the attainment of that goal as satisfying as they thought it would be.
 - d. How about other examples within our own lives where we chase things around and expect them to give us satisfaction and happiness, but only let us down?
 - i. I read about a guy who got a big raise after working his way up the corporate ladder – and so he bought everything he couldn’t afford before.
 1. Soon enough, the fancy car he drove became just another car.

- 2. The vacations he took were ok, but nothing special.
- 3. The nice jewelry and watches were fine, but whatever.
- e. So much of our world is filled with “attainment”, or the desire to take a step up in society, to own more or better things, or to be great in some way.
- f. It might seem strange, but the crowd of 5000 that Jesus fed in the Gospel readings was also focused on attainment rather than the fulfillment of God.
- III. **Jesus gets chased down by the crowd in our Gospel today.**
 - a. He has gone to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to continue ministry, but the crowd finds Him... with the humorous comment... “Oh Jesus! What are you doing here?” (Vs 25)
 - b. Instead of feeding them again, Jesus calls them out by telling them what’s in their hearts – You are not looking for more teaching and truth from God, you are looking for another free meal.
 - i. The Maker... of meals... or the King... of bread – Jesus is not a vending machine to create a worldly dependence on Him.
 - ii. How easy would it have been for Jesus to gain a following by offering an all-you-can-eat buffet wherever He went?
 - 1. The people would follow Him everywhere, but for what reason?
 - c. Jesus tells them to stop working for and seeking the food that does not last, but instead to trust in Him.
 - i. So, instead of working for bread, they want to know what working for God looks like.
 - ii. Jesus knows they are confused again, and answers that it means to believe in Him... the Messiah... the Savior.
 - 1. Faith in Jesus is not a work, but the point He’s making is that they place their trust in the wrong things for fulfillment, so as they come to faith in Him, there is no more to “attain”.
 - 2. In fact, just as He says to the woman at the well in John chapter 4 that she will never be thirsty again by the living water He offers, He tells these people they will never hunger again by the bread He offers.
 - d. Jesus declares that He is the bread from heaven that is all you need.
 - i. Of course, anyone with a Jewish background would understand that bread from heaven goes back to the Exodus and the wilderness wandering as God scattered manna from the heavens each day for the Israelites to survive.
 - 1. Remember, they were longing for the days they had food in Egypt – like it was better to be in bondage as slaves!
 - 2. But in the wilderness, God provided them with food to eat that was only enough for the day, and they were required to live just one day at a time.
 - ii. The big revelation in this exchange is Jesus claiming to be the very bread from heaven that sustains...

- e. The Bread of Life is Jesus Christ and is only found through faith in Him.
- IV. **Bread for earthly needs** sustains us, but spiritual bread sustains us eternally.
 - a. The short-sighted nature of our lives in this world make it hard to see the value of the bigger things – things like Jesus as our Bread of Life.
 - b. In our reading, Jesus is claiming to be the most important thing – to be the one thing we need more than anything else – spiritual sustenance.
 - c. The part that seems so strange, but wonderful, is that Jesus was sacrificed on the cross and raised to life again to become the fulfillment of His words.
 - i. The death He endured and the gift of the empty tomb were all about saving us from the sins that condemn us to death.
 - 1. God so loved the world that He gave us His only Son to die on the cross for us, so that whoever believes in Him would not die, or be condemned forever, but have life that never ends.
(John 3:16)
 - ii. So, as Jesus told His disciples on the night He was betrayed that the bread they ate and the wine they drank were His very body and blood, He was speaking of a spiritual fulfillment and life that could only be attained by Him.
 - 1. Only through His death and suffering could these things be unlocked for us – and now we get to experience the very blessing He promised as we partake in the Lord's Supper.
 - 2. You could say that this is "all we need" when it comes to the power of God's forgiveness, life, and salvation.
- V. **I spoke to a gentleman after a recent memorial service.**
 - a. He was very open with me as we chatted, and he said that he came to faith in Jesus later in life.
 - b. He thanked me for preaching about Christ as the most important thing because, in his words, "When it's all said and done, nothing matters more than Jesus."
 - c. He said that he thought about having a nice house or nice cars, but none of those things could be better than knowing Jesus.
 - i. In fact, he said growing older has given him a much different perspective about the things of the world – they don't mean much.
 - ii. The only thing that matters is what gets us to heaven, and that is our Savior Jesus Christ.
 - iii. He had experienced many of the good things life had to offer, but nothing compared to the weight of eternal glory... no car, house, career, or anything could compare to faith in Jesus and eternal life.
 - d. I walked away encouraged that Jesus is still at work today, bringing many sons (and daughters) to glory (Hebrews 2:10) through the power of His Word.
 - e. When I say Jesus gives you all you need for life, I realize we need earthly sustenance, but He provides all that too.

f. In the end, Jesus is our true sustenance, providing everything we need for both this life and eternal life through His sacrifice and resurrection. Amen

¹ Source: Brian Welk, "Michael Phelps Examines 'Post-Olympic Depression' in HBO's 'The Weight of Gold,'" The Wrap (7-20-20)