John 6:43-47 Stop grumbling among yourselves, Jesus answered. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: “They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

You do know how this is going to turn out, don’t you? We have been following this history of Jesus since Pentecost 8. At that point Jesus for the first time sent out his disciples in order to do some mission work among the Jewish people. At Pentecost 9 we heard how they returned to Jesus but because of the crowds they didn’t even have a moment to sit down and eat. Jesus gets the disciples into a boat, has rest time, meal time and talk time and then ends up on a part of the shore of the Sea of Galilee pretty much wilderness. But we also heard how the crowds were able to keep up with the boat so when Jesus landed there are the crowds again. Jesus has compassion on them and spends his time teaching the people. But it is toward evening and on Pentecost 10 we heard of the miracle of the Feeding of the 5,000! When that miracle was completed and the crowd was beginning to get the wrong idea about Jesus (they wanted to make him King!), Jesus dismisses his disciples, sends them off in the boat to the other side of the sea and then dismisses the crowd. We learn that Jesus will also go off and find a secluded place by himself for a good part of the night. Once Jesus spent time in prayer, Jesus then walks on the water to join his disciples, although we did not hear this history this year.

So Pentecost 11 picks up with the crowds once again finding Jesus and this big discussion of **“Jesus the bread that came down from heaven, Jesus the bread of life”** takes place. The people do not like this teaching of Jesus. We heard their grumbling at the beginning of the text. It will get worse, this grumbling against the teaching of Jesus. Next week we will hear another installment of this history where Jesus doubles down on what he is teaching. On Pentecost 14 you will hear how people will walk away from Jesus, they reject him because they do not like or believe what he says! You heard me right, the people walk away and reject Jesus and what he teaches. In many ways this is a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. It is the beginning of the peoples’ hostility toward Jesus that will eventually lead to the crowds shouting, “Crucify him, crucify him!”

So why didn’t Jesus back off? Why didn’t he just pause a moment and since, according to many of today’s religious leaders, Jesus was only about being loving and compassionate, why didn’t Jesus change his tune and teaching? I mean all he had to do what say something like, “Hey, you guys are right! I didn’t mean ‘I am the bread from heaven, the bread of life from my Father, what I meant was that I find symbolism and similarities in my life that will help us see how God the Father is working and showing us what we can all become. What I meant was that bread is important and it is necessary for you to see how God, that Great Spirit in the sky, that wonderful force of good and love, wants you to have bread and to share that bread with your fellow man. Is that better? Do you guys like that way of teaching?”

Jesus doesn’t do that, does He? He doesn’t because what he is saying is important and truthful. What he is saying is the very word and marvel of God the Father and is not something that can be changed at the whim and wish of mankind. What Jesus is saying is the heart and core of our Christian faith! And we don’t even have to wait until next week when Jesus kind of “doubles down” on this teaching, we can look at his words right now and grasp the point. Our theme will be: **HE WHO BELIEVES.**

So here are the people grumbling against Jesus. In truth, they are grumbling because they understand that Jesus has just claimed to be the Son of God, the Messiah promised of God. Jesus did that as he spoke to them of the manna from heaven, as he drew the attention of the people to what the Scripture they had learned taught. The manna was not about eating. The manna was about God’s blessings and life to his people. How God will supply all things necessary and be the complete help for his people. The lesson of the manna is about God doing all to save his people!

But the people didn’t get that, just like we often don’t get it. The lessons of the Bible are right there to show us that God is our help, our strength, our comfort and our sure salvation. But we get all wrapped up in this life, in our food, blessings, needs and wants. That’s what the Jewish people did. Jesus fed them in the wilderness and they decided Jesus should be their king. When Jesus rejects their ideas, they get offended because Jesus is not doing, not meeting what they want. Do you do the same? Do you put off God, ignore God, slight God, turn away from God and his wonder because your life is not what you think it should be? Do you blame God for your struggles and difficulties instead of turning to Him for help and guidance in this world of sin? You know what I mean. That attitude in your heart that says, “God, things are not going the way I had them planned so clearly you are not a very good and loving God. How can I trust you when you won’t give me what I want?” Just like the people before Jesus!

Listen to what Jesus says to these people. **“Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets; ‘They will be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.”**

Get the feeling there is no backing off? Notice how Jesus directly tells them that what He is teaching them is from the Prophets, the Scriptures. Even better, Jesus here makes reference to one of the promises of God concerning the Messiah. A prophecy that says the Messiah would be God and would teach the people directly! Jesus has just informed the people, again, that He is the One who fulfills the promises of the Messiah, that He is the Son of God sent to teach them the very truth of God! “If you believe in God, if you believe in this All powerful, all knowing, present everywhere God, who acts and moves for the sake of the salvation of people and who has revealed himself and his ways to the world then you need to believe in Me,” is what Jesus is saying! If God is God, then God has directed you to Me. Jesus is what it is all about. Do notice that Jesus clearly references the future resurrection of the dead that He will accomplish. Jesus is what it is all about!

By the way, just quickly. Did you catch that part that says that if you are a believer it is because God has drawn you, God has given you the spiritual gifts that make faith and salvation possible? It is because of passages like this that we Lutherans feign from claiming any credit for our faith or even being saved. We don’t say that “I accepted,” or “I prayed Jesus into my heart.” If it were not for the work of the Father in calling us, we would not and could not be His children. So give God and only God the credit!

Let’s go on in what Jesus says. **“No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.”** I have not a single doubt that Jesus is speaking to these people about some of the very prophecies and promises of the Old Testament that he shared with them before he fed them and that he has been sharing with the people all along. And again notice that Jesus is telling the people He is God! It boils down to this: Either you believe Jesus is God who came to give the gift of eternal life or He is not! Either Jesus speaks the truth and is what God’s Word promises or He is not. If he is not then God’s Word is nothing but foolishness. Make no mistake as to what is at stake here. This is Jesus clearly pointing out his purpose as the Savior, the Messiah, the One who came to bring eternal life and salvation or there is squat!

Me, I believe Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. I believe that Jesus is the one who has revealed God’s Word, who has fulfilled that Word and who is the heart and core of that Word. I believe that Jesus is, as John says, **The Word, and that Word was God!”** I believe that in order to know the Father and His truth, you must believe in Jesus as the Son of God, the spokesmen of God, the revealer of God, the purpose of God and true God himself. I believe that we cannot pick and choose what we want to believe or not believe, that we cannot dismiss this teaching of Scripture or that teaching and still be true believers in God. I believe this whole lesson from beginning to end is about faith in Jesus or rejecting Jesus. And nothing in today’s world changes that fact.

That is why Jesus so clearly says what he says. Especially that little line of our highlighted text, **“I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.”** Believes what? What Jesus has been saying! That He is the Christ, the Son of God. That He is the one who reveals the Father and the work the Father has been doing. That He is the fulfillment of Scripture from beginning to end. That faith in Jesus is a faith that brings, leads to and grants the gift of eternal life.

We are talking about faith in Jesus, faith in God and thus, make no mistake, faith in God’s Word. What do we mean when we talk this faith stuff? Faith is absolute trust and confidence in something, but not something seen and experienced. Faith is about what is unseen, about what is hoped for and expected. Hebrews 11:1 tells us what faith is. **“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”** In the new EHV that passage is translated this way: **“Faith if being sure about what we hope for, being convinced about things we do not see.”** That’s what faith is. Please note it is not an emotion, a feeling, a sense, an experience or anything as fickle as that. It is a hope, a sure and certain confidence in the promises and word of God.

You do grasp that don’t you? A sure and certain confidence in the promises and word of God. So when Jesus says, **“I am the living bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,”** either you believe Jesus or you do not! You don’t fudge his words. You believe exactly what He says even if it doesn’t seem to make sense to you. He is God and you are not. Faith absolutely trusts His Word!

By the way, today we have the opportunity for Holy Communion. In that sacrament given to us by Jesus can you, in light of these words, ignore what he said. **“Take eat, this is my body…This cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”** Me, I believe the plain words. Jesus says this is his body and his blood. I don’t know how bread and wine can be these things, but it is not my job to dissect it or make it logical to my poor human brain. It is my job to believe what Jesus said. So that when I eat of this bread and drink of this cup in faith, I receive the very living bread He promised and will live forever. Live because I have trusted absolutely Jesus!!

The same goes for other promises of God’s Word found in and connected to Jesus. His resurrection from the dead proves the forgiveness of sin is mine, proves that Jesus is the Son of God and my Savior from sin. This resurrection tells me Jesus is God and that I should not doubt a single word or even a single syllable of what He has said! If your church doesn’t not teach the factual and actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead, if they somehow fudge on that message (“Jesus lives in our hearts, Jesus is alive in the spirit.”) then they are a dead church. Because in truth, that church is just like the people of today who, we will hear, will walk away from Jesus and reject what He has taught!

So that’s the lesson today. Faith in Everlasting life. Faith in what Jesus says and what the Bible says. Faith that sees the horror and terror of sin and yet faith that grasps the wonder and forgiveness of Jesus! Faith that trusts, has confidence, that sure and certain hope that only Jesus can bring. Wrestle with God’s Word. Dig into the wonder of Jesus. Know that He is your Savior who with the Father and the Holy Spirit has called you to faith, has granted you forgiveness and eternal life. Know that Jesus and his gift is sure and certain because of His power and wonder. That is faith. Amen.