

Emmanuel Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Pentecost 12
August 15, 2021
Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoeft
We all believe in one true God

—John 6:41-51

⁴¹At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."
⁴²They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven?'" ⁴³"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. ⁴⁴"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It 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. ⁴⁶No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. ⁵⁰But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. ⁵¹I 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."

Classes at Emmanuel Lutheran School began on Thursday. Having a Lutheran school is such a tremendous blessing to our church and community. How many of you attended Lutheran schools in your life? My guess is that quite a few of you had that privilege. I had the privilege of attending WELS schools from kindergarten to senior year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. From Mrs. Noon to President Treptow, I was instructed in the truths of God's Word. As I attended a Lutheran Elementary School, one of my favorite classes was Hymnology. This was a class in which we learned about and memorized hymns. I know that the Lions of Emmanuel have a similar class.

Hymns are wonderful tools in the instruction of children (and adults) in God's Word. Singing somehow helps implant a truth. Therefore, Hymnology is such an important class. Hymns are based on portions of the Bible. They express the truth of the Gospel. Memorizing hymns helps children to participate in the worship service. It also instills the truths that these songs proclaim into their hearts and minds.

In the spirit of Hymnology, I like to teach my daughters different hymns. By the way, parents, a couple of good resources to do this would be buying the hymnal for home use. Or buying hymn board and picture books from Kloria Publishing. Using one of these picture books, I have acquainted my daughters with the hymn, "We all believe in One True God." This hymn expresses the truth about our Triune God. The second stanza of this hymn expresses well the truth that our gospel lesson teaches. This verse proclaims, "**We all believe in Jesus Christ.**"

Not all people believe in Jesus Christ, which is sad to say. We know this clearly based on our observations of this world. People deny Jesus' salvation and love. They deny His Word. They act as though His message is foolishness. This is not a new phenomenon, though. Even in Jesus' day, people rejected him. They believed His message to be foolish. Before our verses for today, Jesus just preached his sermon about how he is the Bread of Life. When the people heard this message, they grumbled about him.

These people grumbled against Jesus because what he said sounded like a foolish message to them. Jesus told them that he was bread. He told them that if anyone ate this bread, they would not die. Jesus also told them that he came down from heaven. All of this did not line up with what made sense to them.

You can hear their grumbling now. "What do you mean bread?! How about you just give us some more of that bread that you gave us before!" The grumble that John focuses on was regarding Jesus' assertion that he came down from heaven. In response to this, they grumbled, "*Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven?'*" Jesus' message sounded like foolishness to them. This is because it did not line up with their reasoning. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, but they knew him to be Mary's son. These two truths did not line up with what they perceived to be possible.

They rejected Jesus' message because it did not line up with their reason. Jesus rebuked them for this. Jesus told them not to grumble. He then went on to teach them. Jesus explained to them that they cannot come to comprehend the truth about Him on their own. Jesus said, "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*" To demonstrate this fact, Jesus quotes to them Isaiah 54:13. The people could not come to know the truth about Jesus on their own. They needed the Father to draw them. Yes, Jesus was Mary's son, but he was also the Son of God. The people could not come to grasp this. They could not reason this truth out. They needed God to teach them. Then, they would know who Jesus is. He is the only one who has seen the Father. He is one with the Father. He was sent by the Father. Drawn by the Father, **they could all believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Mary's Son.**

Jesus Christ, the child of Mary is the Son of God who came down from heaven. This is a hard truth to understand. Yet, God's Word proclaims it. The second stanza of "We All Believe in One True God," expresses this superrational truth. In this stanza, we sing, "Son of God and Mary's Son, Who descended from his throne." We cannot fully understand this, but Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, declared that he was the Son of God. The Bible declares that Jesus is the Son of God. We get to sing this truth to one another through this hymn. Yes, **we all believe in Jesus Christ.**

It is true that here at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, we all believe in Jesus Christ. We confess the second article of the Apostles. We proclaim it through song. We believe "in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." We confess this all about a person that we have never seen.

Does that ever bug you? Is it ever challenging to confess this? I mean, really. You believe that a man, who walked on this earth 2,000 years ago, is the Son of God. Does it bug you that you confess something that you do not understand? Does it bug you that you confess a truth that you cannot prove? You cannot even claim to be an eyewitness of him. You did not see Jesus' walking on this earth. Does this bug you?

If it does, you are not alone. I think all of us can admit that there is that seed of doubt. There is that questioning that does not want to submit to something that is above our rationality. This is common. This is something that I struggle with as well.

Let me say, though, the commonality of this doubt does not make it okay. This doubt is rooted in pride. Hearing God's truth and doubting it because it does not make sense to you or seems foolish is an arrogant move to make. This is placing yourself above God and believing that your reasoning is greater than His. This is saying, "God must be wrong because I am right." A ludicrous statement, right? But that is precisely what we do when we doubt the truth proclaimed about who Jesus is. Rejecting God's truth for the sake of your rationality is idolatry. In doing that, you make a false god out of your own mind. Brothers and sisters, that is what a tiny seed of doubt can become. The result would be condemnation.

In the face of this, we cry out, "*I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.*" (Mark 9:24) Praise the Father that he has drawn you to Jesus. Through His Holy Word, the Holy Spirit created your faith to believe in Jesus. Now, we can sing, "**We all believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Mary's Son.**" Although it does not make sense to us, this is a wonderful truth. Jesus Christ had to be truly man so that he could live and die for us. Jesus Christ had to be truly God so that his life and death would mean something for us. Thank our Heavenly Father that He has drawn us to Jesus, our Savior.

After rebuking the people for grumbling at the truth of who he is, Jesus proclaims to them what he gives. This is everlasting life. Jesus compares himself to the manna in the wilderness. The people who ate the manna eventually died, but those who ate the bread of life, which is believed in Jesus, would have eternal life. When Jesus says, "*this bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,*" he is speaking about what he came to do to give life. Jesus would give his life on the cross. By his death, he would give life to all who believe in him. **Jesus would win for them salvation.**

The second stanza of "We All Believe in One True God" proclaims what Jesus came to do. So, we sing in this hymn, "**And for us salvation won,** By whose cross and death are we, Rescued from all misery." What great tools hymns can be in beautiful and simply proclaiming the salvation that Jesus has won for us.

The fact that Jesus gives life is a wonderful truth that we get to proclaim. This is, again though, something that we cannot understand on our own. We cannot comprehend how long eternity is. We cannot see heaven. There is another aspect to this that our reason does not want to accept. This is that we do not have to do anything to receive this gift of life. The first part of the sermon showed us that believing is not a work. God draws people to Jesus. You do not need to choose to follow Jesus or "make a decision," but God draws you to him. This goes entirely against what makes natural sense to us.

Sometimes, we can make this natural desire to do something to earn life seem like an honorable thing. "Oh, they are just trying to do the right thing. At least they have good intentions. Yeah, they just wanted to know God personally." Remember, though, striving to gain life differently than God has revealed because it does not make sense to us, will not gain life at all. It also is that idolatry of self. It is placing yourself above God. There is nothing honorable about trying to save yourself. It is a rejection of God's superrational truth.

Do you want to live forever in heaven? "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.*" (Acts 16:31) Jesus lived a perfect life for you. Jesus died an innocent death in your place. Jesus rose from the grave. Jesus is your Savior. Jesus gives you life. The Word of God proclaims this truth to you. The Holy Spirit creates this saving faith in your heart. What a wonderful gospel message, he for us salvation won.

Kids of Emmanuel Lutheran School, I do not know what your favorite class is. But, you should definitely tell me when we are shaking hands after the service. I hope that Hymnology is in the running. When you study,

memorize, and sing the hymns, you get to hear about the superrational message of God's love. Having been drawn by the Father, you can sing, "**We all believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Mary's Son, Who descended from His throne And for us salvation won, By whose cross and death are we Rescued from all misery."**