

The Living Bread from Heaven

Grace, mercy, and peace to you – to Aleatha’s family, her friends, her brothers and sisters in Christ here at Immanuel. May the grace, mercy and peace that God the Father gives to you, in and through His Son Jesus Christ – be yours today, and forevermore.

In these past few days you have faced the reality of death. That’s just a part of the ABC’s of the Bible – that all are sinners – that the wages of sin is death – that all people will die someday, unless Jesus returns before then.

Death has a way of leaving a big hole in our lives. Something is wrong – it’s not the way God created things to be – His “good” creation is one of LIFE, and DEATH is an unwanted invader. It rips someone away – turns things upside down – makes us long for relief (for the hole to be filled).

The death of a loved one can impact you in many and various ways – and, I suppose, it often depends on your relationship to that person --- how you interacted with them, spent time with them --- the hole in your life as a daughter, granddaughter, family member or friend.

The death of Aleatha McKay has left a hole here at Immanuel – with the body of Christ gathers here. Sunday mornings will not be the same. I stand up here and practice my sermon – and somewhere around 8:05 – 8:10, I’ll hear the front door open, and Aleatha walks in – and the routine begins.

Just last Sunday one of the elders commented that it was strange to pull into the parking lot and not see Aleatha’s car. A hole. Something strange. Something out of place. Aleatha was always here. And her actions said something.

The Lord, her God, says, “You shall have no other gods” – and even though the world tempts us with other treasures, other “important things” – Aleatha loved the Lord with all her heart, and all her soul, and all her mind. She treasured the Lord above all things.

The Lord says, “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God” – so Aleatha would use it properly – calling upon it in every trouble, praying, praising, and giving thanks. Aleatha would sit right over there each Sunday morning before the Divine Service – reading the Scripture lessons for the day, saying her prayers.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy,” the Lord says – and so Aleatha would come to church, holding it sacred, and gladly hearing and learning God’s Word. And to that end – we could learn something from her.

Folks, don’t let anything keep you away from church – where God gathers His children around Himself in order to serve them. Listen to God who speaks to you in His Word. Talk to Him in your prayers. Live in communion with Him by receiving His Sacraments.

More than anything – like her Lord – that is what Aleatha would like to pass down to her children and grandchildren, and to everyone gathered here today. She would love to see ALL of you in heaven one day – and God’s Word on that matter is pretty simple and clear.

The ABC’s of salvation is that Jesus has prepared a place for you in heaven – and He alone is the way, the truth and the life. “NO ONE comes to the Father” except through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Do not be led astray by the lies and temptations of the world – that tell you that you can live apart from Christ and His Body the Church and still go to heaven – that tell you that you have been baptized, and so you don’t need to listen to God, or pray to Him, or give Him thanks and praise.

The one who has saving faith doesn’t live apart from Christ – from His Word and Sacraments – it abides in Jesus, and Jesus abides in him.

Just as a person must eat to live – so also one must partake of Jesus, the Living Bread from Heaven – to live eternally. Again, His Word – His promises – are clear. “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

That is what Jesus is talking about when He tells His disciples that He is going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house. Jesus is going to the cross – to give up His flesh into death – for the LIFE of the world.

What sin has corrupted – the death which it brings into God's "good" creation and to all people – the Son of God, Jesus, redeems with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. His death in our place redeems us from all sin – and in His resurrection we are reconciled to our Father in heaven.

In other words, the hole is filled. Aleatha's death is undone by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By His wounds – sinners are healed. Death is defeated – and in Jesus – the way of everlasting life is opened to us.

The faith which trusts His promises – hungers and thirsts for this true food and true drink that comes down from heaven. The child of God gathers up this Bread from Heaven and consumes it by faith. The Christian yearns to eat and drink the very Body and Blood of our Savior in the Lord's Supper – believing what He promises – that it is "for you, for the forgiveness of all your sin."

How could one possibly stay away – not eat and drink of the Living Bread from Heaven – not receive the life and salvation that comes with the forgiveness of sins. That's just not consistent with what God says in the Bible. That is not faith in Jesus' promises.

Rather, like Aleatha, faith in Jesus means coming to church, sitting in the pew, and receiving Jesus, and all the treasures He brings, and giving praise and thanksgiving to Him.

Before today's service began, the family gathered in the library for Scripture and prayer. The Word of God they heard came from Psalm 122 – "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'"

The Lord has given us a good example in Aleatha. "Let US go to the house of the Lord." Let us rejoice to be gathered to our Savior – to receive His Sabbath rest – to eat the Living Bread from Heaven – even as He gives us life eternal. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.