

Sermon – John 6:56-69; Ephesians 6:10-20
David R. Lyle
Grace Lutheran Church
Pentecost 14 – Year B
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“Wonder Bread”

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. “You can’t handle the truth!” So thunders Jack Nicholson’s character, Col. Jessup, in the climactic moment of *A Few Good Men*. While Col. Jessup himself does not seem to have a very firm understanding of the truth, his words hit their mark. We can’t handle the truth, is so many ways. We tell ourselves little lies to get through the day. We are caught up in massive waves of misinformation. Deepfakes have become part of the digital world in which we spend so much time. To be a Truther is to believe things that are false. We have such a complex relationship with the truth that many would rather believe complex lies than simple truth. You want the truth? Can you handle it?
2. So many of those who had followed Jesus no longer could. The truth became more than they could handle. Those who eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood will live forever? I mean, to be fair to the crowds, this is hard to wrap one’s head around. Eat and drink your body and blood, Jesus? But that’s only part of it. There is another difficult truth here, perhaps even harder to admit to ourselves: We need what Jesus wants to give us, and without him we are without hope. The truth of the matter is that, in ourselves, we are broken, sinful, and finite. We are empty. We are hungry for bread that will satisfy, but we have turned our ears to the devil and his wiles, as St. Paul puts it, believing that original lie that we can be like gods; that we can take care of

- ourselves; that we can make it on our own, thank you very much. And often enough we can pull off this lie. Until we can't. Until a relationship is fractured, or a diagnosis is received, or world events overtake us. Until we are reminded, in ways we can no longer deny, of the truth about ourselves.
3. Perhaps the crowds that day in Galilee were still able to believe the lie. But not Peter and the rest of the Twelve. Peter issues his cry of faith, which, by the way, is not a full-blown sacramental theology or christological confession. It is a cry born of honesty. Peter may not yet understand all that Jesus is saying, but this much Peter knows: There is nowhere else to turn, no one else with words of life. If you think you know where you're going, it's offensive to hear Jesus say he is the way. If you're think you're full, you can turn your nose up at the food he offers. But once you accept the truth, that without him you're lost and hungry, his words become pure promise, grace upon grace leading the way home.

 4. When I was in seminary, I would drive south from time to time to visit friends in Iowa. Just before leaving Minnesota on Highway 218, there's a sign: "Lyle – Turn Here." And I often did, if for no other reason than when life gives you such personalized directions, you should follow them! Plus, Lyle, MN is a cute little town. The signs in our lives are not usually so clear, but the truth is, once you open your eyes of faith to look for them, they're hard to miss. Today, this morning, bread and wine are broken and poured, given and shed for you, Jesus' own life offered for the salvation of the world. As the preacher David Lose writes, "when all the things we usually count on come up empty and we no longer know where to turn, then we may hear the sacraments calling us back to see God clearly at work for us through water, bread, and wine, combined with God's mighty word of forgiveness, acceptance, and life." This morning, in just a little bit, we will hear God's Word joined to these waters, and right before our eyes we will see Eugene dressed in the full armor of God, the very righteousness of Jesus Christ. This morning, in just a

little bit, Jesus our host will put himself in our hands, that we may eat and live.

5. We live in a creation shot through with the wonder of God, a cosmos in which the risen Christ is present everywhere. But the truth is we will struggle to find Jesus until we look where he wants to be found, in those places where he gives himself to us. God, Martin Luther writes, “is present everywhere, but does not wish that you grope for him everywhere. Grope, rather, where the Word is, and there you will lay hold of [God] in the right way.” Or to put it another way, turn here, and find Christ as he gives himself freely to you. Look to the cross, to the floodwaters of baptism, to the heavy-laden table of grace. Grope, and lay hold not of an idea of God but of the God who is, and always will be, *for you*.

6. The truth, it’s true, can be hard to accept. But that doesn’t make it any less true. So, hear it again: On our own, we are sinners. We are broken. We are hurting and hungry. We are mortal. But hear this, too: We are not on our own. You are not alone. You are forgiven. You are healed. Whole. Fed. And alive now in the power of Christ and his resurrection forever. Jesus Christ is the truth, and he has handled the forces of sin and death. He is the Bread of Life, given for you. Turn here, friends. Come and eat. Come and live. Lord, to whom else can we go? Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.