Ok, we’re back into the Gospel of John. And it’s always hard for me to peach on this book because of the terminology that is great language but has become in the Christian church rather misleading in my view. And I’ve talked about this a lot but the most misused and misunderstood term that John uses is this whole concept of eternal life. And I’ve talked about it on several occasions, but still when it comes up it’s good to review. We all know John 3:16. For God so love the world that he gave his only son, so that whoever believes may not perish may not perish, but may have eternal life. It’s one of the big ones. And what that has come to mean is that you get to go to heaven when you die if you believe. How this happened I don’t know. Because John defines eternal life right in the Gospel. John 17:3. “And this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”. Eternal life is knowledge of God, and of his Son.

Knowing or Knowledge here to needs to be interpreted well. And knowledge in the Bible is not head knowledge. It’s not I know the answer. It’s I know you. I’m getting to know you. It’s relationship. So that’s eternal life in Christ at least in the Gospel of John. Because that’s what he says it is. So as I understand it, John 3:16 would mean something like this. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him might get to know this God. That’s eternal life. It’s a connection, to God and one another, that we can have today. Eternal life is today, today is a part of eternity. Eternal life is about forever to be sure, but it’s not primarily about something that happens after you die, that is really missing the point that John is trying to make I think.

Once we get past that, then it’s a lot easier to do this text. As long as your hearing this language about eternal life and you’re thinking that it’s about the afterlife, or something like that, you won’t be able to get at what this is about today. Once you see that when Jesus says he is the bread of life that it’s about a connection, a relationship, then the text becomes much more down to earth. Something much more connected to daily reality. It’s not beyond the moon. It’s not religious speak. It’s in every interaction we have with people and this creation, that this bread can feed us. So to translate again. “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for healthy relationships, which the Son of Man will give to you. The Bread of Life is that which feeds and creates healthy connections, with God with other people the creation that we live on, and the relationship that we have with ourselves.

So let’s take a look at the metaphor that Jesus uses for who he is, bread, and see how this metaphor can help us. And the first thing we can say about bread is that in this context, it was the most common and ordinary kind of food there was. The word that Jesus uses for bread here is a word that refers to barley bread which was the bread of the poor. And since most people were poor, this kind of bread was the most common and ordinary and humble and unimpressive kind of food that there was. Probably for us it would be something like boiled potatoes. Nothing special in other words. So if we said that Jesus was the boiled potatoes that came down from heaven we would be getting at what he’s saying here. Nothin’ fancy, just the most common and ordinary reality that you can imagine. The bread of life can happen in the way you interact with the person behind the counter at Casey’s. Or the person who cuts you off in traffic. Or your wife or husband or kids. That’s what eternal life is about. That’s where it’s found as you learn to believe.

Jesus later on in our chapter identifies specifically what the bread of life is that brings eternal life. See you’re still thinking about heaven aren’t you? But when Jesus identifies exactly what the bread is then, its last thing you would expect. And the bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh. IT’s his humanity. So a Jesus is the power of a healthy relationship that allows you to be human. Your flesh is what makes you a human being. It’s the reality of touch. It’s why when you could only visit at the rest home looking through a window or on a screen that we all knew that something was missing. The flesh was missing. It’s the reality of touch, of a handshake, of a hug. Your flesh is also the part of you that gets sick. It’s your imperfections and that which limits you. When you’re in a relationship where it’s OK to be human, to be a creature, to have your feelings. When that happens, when it’s OK to be human you’re beginning to receive the bread of life that Jesus is. He is the one who shares that with you. Just to be together and share experiences is to begin to learn something about the Bread of life.

This week I was taken back a little bit with the whole thing with Simone Biles. I assume that you all have heard about this. But Jesus as the Bread leading to eternal life, was of all over that. There she was carrying the expectations of the entire world on her shoulders to put on this superhuman performance. That’sthe world, man. Don’t you get tired of it? All the hype? I sure do. Chasing after these superhuman performances. That’s the just crowd in Gospel. They’re looking for the supernatural, or the superhuman who wows everybody. Following Jesus around to see the next big miracle. This hunger for the next big star. We often want the extra ordinary.

But Jesus was revealed big time, when she became a common and ordinary human being. That was her flesh. Her weakness, her limitations that she shared openly with the whole world. That’s where Jesus lives. That’s what eternal life is about. She even said, “There’s something more to me than gymnastics”. Wow, that’s getting healthy. Right? You don’t need to win a gold medal. You don’t need to stand head and shoulders above the crowd. You can be human, limited, imperfect. Real. Jesus shared our imperfections in love and when that happens, it’s the bread of life. It’s all around us all the time. And sure enough, there were some people who mocked Simon Biles and called her a quitter. So when you see people making mistakes and screwing things up and making a mess of things and revealing their weaknesses can you believe? Can you share the Bread of Life? That its OK to be human? Or it is just ridicule and mockery and shame and blame? There are quite a few people here who have told me, “Pastor your human like everybody else”. Thank you. It’s the bread of life. It’s a taste of eternal life. Why? Because it’s about that connection, that relationship that you have with people.

This of course is the foundation of a certain kind of fellowship. It’s what a church is meant to be. And it’s the kind of fellowship where everyone holds everything in common. In the Christian community what this means is that all that Jesus Christ shared with us in the flesh is ours. And all that we share in the flesh, in our daily walk, even our daily grind is his. The bread of life, eternal life is a place where we hold everything in common.

Listen to how Martin Luther describes what communion means in the church. What Christian fellowship is. He’s talking about communion here, where we all share the Body and blood of Christ. Listen how he describes it.

This fellowship consists in this, that all the experiences of Christ and his saints are shared with and become the common property of him who receives this sacrament. (That’s the bread of life right? Eternal life, remember it’s the connection, the relationship) Again, all sufferings and sins also become common property, and thus we love. The members have the same care for one another; if one member suffers, all suffer together, if one member is honored, all rejoice together. This is obvious: if anyone’s foot hurts him, yes, even the little toe, the eye at once looks at it, the fingers grasp it, the face puckers, the whole body bends over to it and all are concerned with this small member, and once it is cared for all the other members are benefited.

Do you see what Luther is saying there and how it is the Bread of life that leads to eternal life? Knowing God, knowing our neighbor, knowing ourselves. It is in the sharing of our real lives together where Jesus lives and we taste eternity. Jesus shares with us his flesh, and his sufferings. His suffering are yours, they are, and yours are his. Your sins are my sins, and mine are yours. Your good day is mine and mine is yours. We’re way more connect that you might think. If I’m in a good mood today it affect the whole group. If I’m depressed you bear it in one or another. This is the just the way life works isn’t it. If it doesn’t rain, I’m on a salary, it doesn’t affect me right? Wrong. We all share it together whether we want to or not. You can say that what goes on behind closed doors is nobody’s business and it’s not, but we all share it anyway even if we don’t know what it is. We bear each other’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

I know that there is a part of us that thinks that what happens in California, or Iran or Iraq, it doesn’t affect me. Homes are burning out west that’s their problem. Well, then you don’t know much about either the bread of life, or eternal life. Because we’re all connected. If you get vaccinated it affects me. If you don’t it affects me. This whole thing about well each person can just do what they want, and that’s freedom, that is just ignorance. Utter ignorance, and cocky arrogance. We’re all connected. That’s the bread of life that leads to eternal life. Healthy relationships with myself, with God, with my neighbor and my world. The old timers called it bearing each others burdens, and they were exactly right I think. I am the Bread of life. Work for that food that leads to eternal life. Real life, real connections, real love. Amen.