

What is the most essential thing in your life?

Bread of course! Without bread/food we die, waste away. Isn't that what Jesus said? "Give us this day our daily bread" enough to keep us alive.

But what is this bread of life he is talking about? Bread that gives eternal life? Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness and they died." Of course, we need bread to live, but everything that must eat to live will someday die. So by "eternal life" Jesus doesn't mean physical life that never ends. Eternal life is about the quality of our life here and now. Eternal life is about more than survival, working for enough bread to keep us alive until we die. Eternal life is meaningful life, rich and abundant. Do you have eternal life? Is your life more than bread?

Jesus says "I am the bread of life." He had it. He felt that God was with him, available 24/7. He had bread to eat, and a reason for eating it. And he had more, eternal life, abundant life. He knew that even a poor carpenter's son had a direct line to God and everyone has access. And nothing can separate us from God, except our own choice.

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The story of David and Absalom is a strange one to read on the day of a baptism, but perhaps more appropriate than you might think. The back story is that Absalom is in a fight with one of his brother's over the evil treatment of his sister. This leads him to a rebellion against his father. Not your typical teenage rebellion but full out civil war. Though warned by David to put down the rebellion without hurting Absalom, David's soldiers think he is only saying this to look holy and triumphantly report the killing of Absalom to him. But David is genuinely grieved tearing his clothes and crying out "Oh would I have died instead of you, o Absalom, my son."

This is true love. David loves Absalom no matter what. No matter his rebellion, no matter that Absalom sought to take his father's life and his kingdom. Yet to David nothing is more important than the love of his son.

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There is nothing like having a baby, or equally life-changing, taking care of an elderly adult to strip away all but the essentials. In pregnancy the focus is the health of the child, and a safe birth. As a person ages we dread the moment when independent living is no longer an option. We hope for a peaceful and painless death. Just after birth, and just before death we focus on the basics, eating, sleeping, pooping. This is essential to life.

Today we will baptize Olivia Grace. Her parents and grandparents will make promises. Promises to raise her in the Christian faith and life. We as a congregation will make promises, to continue to worship God, tell the stories of our faith, share bread and wine with each other, respect each other, pray for the world and work for justice. We do these things to remind our selves that eternal life is , what are the essential things. These are the things that give us a rich and abundant life. Most importantly today we claim for Olivia, and for ourselves, the essential truth of God.

After the baptism I will pour oil on Olivia's head and mark the sign of the cross on her forehead saying "you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." This is the essential thing, more important than bread, that sleeping and pooping, than learning or remembering. This is knowing that you already have eternal life, the love of God, stronger than any human love, a love that can never be broken or forgotten, that no sin can block out.

Olivia, you are marked as Christ's own forever.

What is the most essential thing in your life? Every morning look in the mirror and see yourself. You are marked as Christ's own forever.