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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

JULY 9, 2006

ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

PASTOR WENDA FRY

1 PASTOR WENDA FRY: As I said at the beginning of our  
2 time together, we are in a worship series called "Body By  
3 God."

4 God created us to be the church, and we are his  
5 body, we belong to him, and it's important that we show signs  
6 of life and health as a church body.

7 So that is why we're talking about things like  
8 movement, and excretion, and reproduction, and nutrition, and  
9 growth and sensitivity, because living things move, all  
10 living things are sensitive to light.

11 All living things grow. All living things  
12 reproduce, or we wouldn't have living things or life.

13 And all living things need nutrition or they will  
14 die.

15 And the church will die unless it consistently feeds  
16 on Jesus and on God's word.

17 So that is why it's important that we talk about  
18 nutrition, and we are going to do that today using John 4,  
19 5 and 6. We are going to take a look at some of those.

20 If you walk down any of the aisles in any book  
21 store, Borders, Barnes & Noble, any book store at all, you  
22 walk down the diet book aisle, you can just be overwhelmed,  
23 especially if you are looking for the right diet just for  
24 you.

25 I did that this past week. I just took a stroll in

1 Barnes & Noble down the diet book aisle.

2 Have any of you ever done that? It's amazing.

3 There are hundreds of diets that you can go on.

4 You can go on a real age diet. You can on a goddess  
5 diet. I didn't even pick that one up.

6 I don't know what that would be like, a goddess  
7 diet. That sounds perfect for our American culture anyway,  
8 doesn't it?

9 You can go on an insulin resistant diet. You can go  
10 on the South Beach Diet.

11 You can go on the Atkins Diet. You can go on just  
12 about any kind of diet you can imagine. It's all there.

13 And the one thing they have in common, of course, is  
14 that they think that their way of eating, using the nutrients  
15 that are in this world, is the best way, and they tell you  
16 how.

17 Very few of those diet books talk about the body as  
18 being designed by God, or it being a potential dwelling place  
19 of God.

20 Very few, but this one does. This book is called  
21 "Body By God".

22 This is the book that inspired the title for our  
23 summer worship series and inspired the messages of our summer  
24 worship series.

25 This is Dr. Ben Lerner. Actually it was given to me

1 by a chiropractor here that is a part of Bethany now, and he  
2 knows Ben Lerner and really likes the things that he speaks  
3 about.

4 It's the owner's manual for maximized living, but  
5 Ben Lerner talks very frankly about the fact that our bodies  
6 are God's bodies; they are not our bodies.

7 And what we put in our body ought to honor the  
8 magnificent design of the human body, and it truly is a  
9 magnificent design, how God has designed the human body.

10 It's amazing how it works, and the Apostle Paul in  
11 First Corinthians 12 refers to the church as a body, just  
12 like the human body, with eyes and ligaments and muscle all  
13 working together.

14 It really is a magnificent design, and what a great  
15 thing to compare the church to is the human body.

16 But Ben Lerner says that there are foods by God, and  
17 then there are foods by man.

18 He has a section in there called foods by God and  
19 foods by man.

20 He says that we can actually empower our lives by  
21 putting in the foods by God, those are smart foods.

22 And then the foods by man are what he calls dumb  
23 foods.

24 And a smart food is like an apple or an orange,  
25 because what he says is that an apple, or a carrot, for

1 example, they have by nature all the fiber, all the  
2 nutrients, all the water, all the enzymes that are needed.

3 It's an intelligent food to eat, because the body  
4 knows how to quickly and easily digest it.

5 But he says foods by man are dumb food, and the  
6 foods by man would be like fried food, for example, anything  
7 that gets further out, or processed food. White foods he  
8 calls them.

9 And those kinds of foods are dumb foods, because  
10 they come into the human body and then it takes a lot longer  
11 for them to digest.

12 And his contention is that those foods by man rob us  
13 of power.

14 They create excess fat and it gets stored in our  
15 body.

16 And it creates blockage, which as Pastor Mark and  
17 Adrian talked about last week, it's a bit of problem, it's  
18 not good, we want to keep things moving.

19 We all want to keep things moving, and so does our  
20 creator, not only in the church, but in our body as well.

21 I like what Ben has to say about that. Foods by  
22 man; foods by God.

23 God takes it one step further, and he says that the  
24 foods by man and the foods that he created, they're sides.

25 They are sides, because there is a main course that

1 is the most important food, and you could get by with no  
2 other food if you just feasted on the main course in your  
3 life.

4           And in John, Chapter 6, Jesus says, "I am the bread  
5 of life."

6           In other words, I am the main course and all other  
7 foods, anything else that comes our way, are simply sides, or  
8 extras, or desserts, but the main course is Jesus Christ.

9           I would like to break that down with you today by  
10 first looking at John 4 in the scripture that I read earlier.

11           I invite you to turn to that, John 4-25. I want to  
12 break that thought down, that Jesus claims himself to be the  
13 main course, the main food for our lives, by looking at  
14 John 4.

15           The story of the woman with the water jar in John 4  
16 sets us up to understand what he's talking about when he  
17 says, "I am the bread of life" a little bit later on.

18           And we have a woman here that comes to the well in  
19 the middle of the day.

20           She's coming to get water for life so that she can  
21 cook and clean and do things.

22           And she comes in the middle of the day, it's like  
23 the desert over there now, about 120, 130 in the sun.

24           She was coming out in that kind of heat in the  
25 middle of the day.

1           This is how I think of it. Think with me in  
2 concentric circles.

3           The center being Jesus Christ, our Lord, our mighty  
4 God, the center

5           And the next concentric circle is closeness to him.

6           And one more out might be a distance, maybe not  
7 doing devotions or prayer every day, but maybe slipping a  
8 little bit on that.

9           And then the next concentric circle out might be  
10 where you have a schedule that is kind of demanding, it's not  
11 always that way, but you might even find yourself saying  
12 you're busier now this week, it's just temporary, maybe a  
13 loved one has suffered a stroke, or maybe you've got to go to  
14 the hospital every day in addition to doing your work and  
15 your family, that's about the fourth out

16           And the fifth out is where the woman was, I think,  
17 and where she was was that place in life where you're  
18 hardened because of everything that has happened to you.

19           You're hardened, you're not close to Jesus, and you  
20 are at the place, about the fifth concentric circle out, it's  
21 at the place where you say to yourself, I don't need anybody,  
22 I can do this on my own.

23           I don't need love. I can live without it. That's  
24 where she's at.

25           She comes in 130 degree heat, she comes to that well

1 to get water, and the last thing she is expecting is anyone  
2 to be there, let alone a man.

3 A man wouldn't be there. The reason a man wouldn't  
4 be there is because in that world they didn't cook and clean,  
5 they didn't get the water. Women got the water.

6 And she was also gossiped about in the town.  
7 Everyone knew that she had been married seven times and now  
8 she was living with a guy out of wedlock. Everyone knew that  
9 about her.

10 So she was hardened, and for the longest time all  
11 she could remember really was this restlessness inside her.

12 She had a hunger and a thirst for as far back as she  
13 could remember.

14 And thinking that she could meet that hunger and  
15 that thirst through sensuality, she went from bed to bed,  
16 food to food, drink to drink, job to job, shopping spree to  
17 shopping spree, funeral to funeral.

18 See, that's why she's out on the fifth concentric  
19 circle, hardened, because by this time she had become cynical  
20 and even contentious of God.

21 There isn't a God. I can't seem to get my hunger  
22 sated; I can't seem to get my thirst quenched.

23 That's where she's at. Have you ever been there,  
24 where you just say to yourself, I don't need love. I don't  
25 need this. That's is where she's at.

1           The last thing she is expecting is for anyone to  
2 talk to her, let alone reach out to her, because when you're  
3 out there hardened like that, way out there where you don't  
4 need anybody, or love, or anything, you don't think somebody  
5 is going to approach you and apologize, or make it right.  
6 You stay where you are.

7           Sometimes God finds you and sometimes you go to a  
8 place where you can find God.

9           But in this case, God found her.

10          "Give me a drink," he says to her.

11          She can't believe he's talking to her.

12          "Give me a drink."

13          She turns and they have this conversation about  
14 worship and water

15          And suddenly she realizes that she is in the  
16 presence of Christ, the Messiah, that's where we came in.

17          "I know the Messiah is coming and when he comes he  
18 is going to proclaim all things."

19          See, that, too, is in the distance for her, way out  
20 there.

21          But then when he says, "I am he, the one you are  
22 talking to," something changes for her.

23          And we know it changes, because suddenly she  
24 realizes that it's not her seven husbands' fault; it's not  
25 even her parents' fault; it's not her childhood's fault; it's

1 nobody's fault but her own.

2 This is the part where she's able to come in from  
3 clear out on number five, come in close, because she realizes  
4 in his presence that she's accountable for her own wrong, and  
5 her own sin.

6 It's nobody's fault. She has done wrong, and she  
7 doesn't feel like defending herself.

8 Like when our spouses point out that we've done  
9 wrong, we want to defend that.

10 I do. Get right after that. That's not what I  
11 meant. I don't want you to say those "you" statements. Can  
12 you just speak to me in "I" statements, blah-blah-blah,  
13 right? You know how it goes, Mark?

14 (Laughter)

15 Yes, that's how it goes for us sometimes. This is  
16 what is so awesome about this moment.

17 She comes face to face with Jesus and she realizes  
18 that she's accountable for her own wrongdoing, and she  
19 doesn't feel like defending herself.

20 In fact, she realizes for the first time in her life  
21 that she is loved and accepted right where she is.

22 That's why she leaves the old jar at the well in the  
23 130 degrees and runs into town to tell of her experience.

24 When we come in contact with the bread of life, and  
25 taste of that goodness that we do not deserve, then we want

1 to share the experience with someone else.

2 And that's what she does. So she runs into town,  
3 Verse 29, come on, you've got to come and see this guy, who  
4 in his presence you don't feel like doing anything but  
5 sitting, because it feels so good.

6 You don't feel like defending yourself. You even  
7 know how wrong you've been and what sins you have done, or  
8 left undone, and you can still sit there in his presence.

9 Because he just looks through you and says I love  
10 you for who you are, and so much so that I don't want you to  
11 stay the way you are.

12 So that is why she runs off and leaves the old. Now  
13 we are at Verse 31.

14 Meanwhile, the disciples come back, they've been in  
15 town.

16 They have seen her and listened to her testimony.  
17 They buy food for the rabbi and they come back and give it to  
18 Jesus and they are urging him to eat, "Come on, Teacher,  
19 would you eat something?"

20 And he says, "I have food to eat that you don't know  
21 about."

22 The disciples are upset. They are jealous. They  
23 are thinking to themselves, did someone else give you that  
24 food?

25 Wait a minute. We were supposed to go into town.

1 They had already heard the testimony of the woman.

2 She said I have just met food and drink, and it can  
3 be for you, too, this food and drink, they run right past her  
4 and get some bread for Jesus.

5 And then they are jealous when they discover that  
6 he's not hungry and he doesn't need the food they got.

7 The disciples just oftentimes don't get it. They  
8 had just heard the testimony of the woman, he's food and  
9 drink.

10 But he says to them I have food to eat that you  
11 don't know about, and they are talking amongst themselves  
12 like they always do, they are confused

13 And then in Verse 34 Jesus says, "My food is to do  
14 the will of Him who sent me, and to complete His work."

15 And this just completely baffles them, and Jesus  
16 sees that it does, and he takes note of that, because that's  
17 what a good rabbi does, and he gets back to it.

18 It's interesting to me that he doesn't get back to  
19 it for like five or six days.

20 Because, see, the testimony of the woman, he's food  
21 and drink, stirs up the people in the town and Jesus stays  
22 there longer to teach because they believed that he's the  
23 real deal.

24 So he does that, and just take a quick look with me  
25 on down, he goes to Cana, where he had turned the water into

1 wine, Verse 46.

2 And he healed an official's son. Can't you just see  
3 the disciples following along and scratching their heads.

4 "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me."

5 So much of the time I spend my time scratching my  
6 head. Do you?

7 What does he mean by that? But there is no time to  
8 explain it.

9 He goes up to Jerusalem and heals this guy that had  
10 been ill for 38 years.

11 Chapter 5, Verse 19, he sits down and he teaches  
12 people a little bit

13 And then the beginning of Chapter 6 he goes to the  
14 other side of the Sea of Galilee and he goes to Tiberias and  
15 a crowd follows him.

16 And he's continuing to heal and then suddenly  
17 there's a crowd there and they are all hungry and again the  
18 disciples don't know where they are going to get any food.

19 But then they find some little boy's lunch and he  
20 blesses that and feeds five thousand.

21 And then, if that's not enough, to just overwhelm  
22 the disciples, they get in the boat and go to the other side  
23 and Jesus comes walking to them on the water.

24 They think it's a ghost. These disciples have had a  
25 pretty bad week. They really have.

1           They are just not doing very well. They have had  
2 major kyros moments and they have not had a chance to process  
3 any one of them. That's what is happening here.

4           And so the crowds are still following in 25 and on  
5 and finally Jesus thinks, yes, I have to get back to that,  
6 "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, to complete  
7 His work," I have to get back to that, because the disciples,  
8 they have had a tough week.

9           When you are confused about something, stay in  
10 prayer and wait.

11           And seek the Lord, because he will get back with you  
12 on it. He will.

13           And that's what he does here with the disciples, so  
14 I am at Chapter 6, Verse 32.

15           Jesus says, "Very truly, I tell you," they are all  
16 listening now, there are crowds sitting down, there are Jews,  
17 there are people from every single concentric circle sitting  
18 in this crowd now.

19           People that feel close to Jesus; people that have  
20 had a hectic schedule, their loved one is dying; people who  
21 are hardened, saying I don't need you, and I don't need love.

22           There are people like that there. They are people  
23 that feel badly about their devotions and prayer time. They  
24 are there.

25           People from every single concentric circle is there,

1 and he says, "Very truly, I tell you, it wasn't Moses that  
2 gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives  
3 you the true bread. For the bread of God is that which comes  
4 down from heaven and gives life to the world."

5 And there must have been something about the way he  
6 said that, that some of them said, "Sir, can I have some of  
7 that? I need that. I'm starving."

8 And that's when he referred to himself as the main  
9 course.

10 "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me,"  
11 Verse 35, "will never be hungry, and whoever drinks and  
12 believes in me will never be thirsty."

13 And he keeps teaching, and he says it again in 48,  
14 "I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna, but this  
15 is the bread that comes down from heaven, so you can eat and  
16 not die. I am the living bread from heaven."

17 He'll get back with you on something that you are  
18 confused about.

19 Just seek him. Wait. He'll teach you. He'll show  
20 you.

21 Take faith, have faith in that. "I am the living  
22 bread that came down from heaven, whoever eats of this bread  
23 will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the  
24 life of the world is my flesh."

25 But at this point some people started to get uneasy,

1 sort of an "ick" factor now that is coming up. I don't know  
2 if I like that very much.

3 Verse 53, Jesus continues, "Unless you eat the  
4 flesh," unless you consider me main course, "and drink my  
5 blood, you have no life."

6 "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood will have  
7 eternal life and I will raise them up on the last day, for my  
8 flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink."

9 But look at Verse 66. "Because of this many of his  
10 disciples turned back and they longer went with him."

11 In other words, no, no, this is way too intimate.  
12 This is too close.

13 I would rather stick with my shopping spree. I  
14 would rather get a new house. This is too much. Too close.

15 Maybe that's not why some of the disciples left him.  
16 Maybe it's because he was saying that he was the real bread  
17 and that they needed to forsake all the other cheap breads  
18 that you can fill up in the world.

19 You know what I'm talking about. The shelves are  
20 just stocked full of the cheap, mass-produced bread.

21 Sex is on every shelve in this world. Drinks of all  
22 kind. The shelves are stocked with power. They are stocked  
23 with money; stocked with sex; stocked with drink and food.

24 And what Jesus is saying is that he is the bread,  
25 the living bread, and he's inviting his disciples and anybody

1 in the crowd to forsake the other, because it doesn't give  
2 the nourishment that will bring you to eternal life.

3           Maybe that's why they turned away. I like some of  
4 those sides. I love my dessert. Maybe that's why they  
5 turned away.

6           What Jesus is really offering is intimacy of a  
7 corner bakery.

8           Mark and I love to go to Europe, it's one of our  
9 favorite places, especially in Switzerland the bakeries are  
10 just fantastic.

11           We love to go in there and get our buns or our  
12 croissants for the picnic or the hike.

13           That's what Jesus is offering us, is the intimacy of  
14 a corner bakery versus the mass-produced white breads of the  
15 supermarket pretty much.

16           And he's offering us a free slice, and if you have  
17 ever had a free slice of bread from a bakery, and it's warm  
18 and you put butter and honey on it, there is nothing like it  
19 and you go and tell others, they give free slices there.

20           That's what the Great Harvest Bread Company does.  
21 Have you been in there?

22           I called up Rockbrook and I said to Jerome, "I  
23 understand you guys give away a free bread slice?"

24           "You haven't been in here and gotten one of our free  
25 slices?"

1 I said, "No."

2 "You better get in here."

3 I said, "What do you do that for? Why do you give  
4 away free slices? That can't be good for your business."

5 "Oh, it is really good for our business. When  
6 people come in, the first thing we ask them is want a free  
7 slice, and they usually take two or three, and we just tell  
8 them help yourself to the butter, and the kids come over from  
9 the pool, we say have as many as you want."

10 What is the church, unless it is the Bread of Life  
11 Bread Company?

12 For this is where there is a free slice offered to  
13 you and to me.

14 It's got stuff in it. It's made of good stuff.  
15 When you eat of the free slice of the bread of life, you have  
16 food, and you have drink, and it will satisfy all of those  
17 insatiable appetites.

18 Today I want you to have a chunk of bread. I  
19 actually went to Great Harvest and bought a bunch of this  
20 nine grain bread.

21 I can hardly lift it. It's good stuff. It's the  
22 nine grain and, of course, it has nine grains and it's  
23 beautiful. It smells so good.

24 Today I want you to take a chunk of it, and when you  
25 get the wine with it, eat a little bit of it and take the

1 rest of your bread back to your seat with you.

2           When we do the blessing together I want you to eat  
3 again, because in the bread that comes from heaven, in the  
4 main course, you get enough food and enough drink for the  
5 living of one day, and the living of the next day, and the  
6 next day after, on into internal life.

7           When you take of this bread, you're promised that  
8 your thirst will be quenched and that your hunger will be  
9 satisfied.

10           You will be filled with the Spirit and his love and  
11 his acceptance.

12           You don't need to be out there on that fifth  
13 concentric circle anymore.

14           Jesus knows what you've done wrong. He sees it.  
15 All he wants you to do is say I know that is wrong and come  
16 close to him again today, into the middle again that is him.

17           Come close and take in his goodness and his mercy  
18 and go from this place and tell others about the free slice  
19 that you were offered today at the Bread of Life Bread  
20 Company.

21           Before we eat, let's pray.

22           We praise you, bread from heaven. We praise you for  
23 your strength of your life in us.

24           We thank you for what you are made of and what  
25 you've made of us in your sacrifice on the cross.

1           For we want to drink today from your living water.  
2 We want to leave our old jars of hardness and hurt and pain  
3 and disappointment and confusion.

4           We want to leave that with you today and come close  
5 and taste of your goodness and love and acceptance.

6           So thank you for serving us today and for breaking  
7 the bread with your disciples. Feed us and nourish us well.  
8 In your name. Amen.

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