

PP | Am the Bread of Life

It started off with a letter printed in the *British Weekly*, which went like this—

"Dear Sir: I have been attending a church quite regularly for the past 30 years. To my consternation, I discovered that I cannot remember a single sermon. I wonder if a minister's time might be more profitably spent on something else? Sincerely..."

For weeks, a huge storm of editorial responses ensued. The uproar finally was ended by this letter—

"Dear Sir: I have been married for 30 years. During that time, I have eaten 32,580 meals—mostly of my wife's cooking. Suddenly, I have discovered that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I have received nourishment from every single one of them. I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago. Sincerely..."

Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times.

I'm 60 years old and I could never begin to count the number of sandwiches I've eaten throughout my lifetime. But bread has played a vital role in my diet from sack lunches in school to the hoagies we devour at our Board Meetings.

Food Consumed Over Lifetime

An insurance man, who seems to have time on his hands, has compiled some interesting statistics. He states that if you have reached the age of seventy, and pursued an average American's existence, you have consumed during your lifetime a total of:

150 head of cattle,

26 sheep,

310 swine,

225 lambs,

2400 chickens,

26 acres of grain,

and 50 acres of fruits and vegetables.

Hungry?

—Bennett Cerf *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times.*

Today we are beginning the first of 7 messages from the book of John. The "I AMs" of the Lord. Last week Pastor Tim packed the suitcase and loaded the car while preparing our hearts and helping us understand about just who I AM is referring to.

John 6:35-36: "*Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe."*

A little context to begin with. Jesus had just fed 5,000 people with just 5 loaves of bread and two fish. After which he sent the people away, told the disciples to meet Him in Capernaum and He went to be alone to pray.

After a while a storm came up and the disciples were full of fear and Jesus came walking on the water to them. Once the people who Jesus had fed realized that He was gone, they took off to find Him in Capernaum. Thus started the conversation we are about to look at.

John 6:25-50

²⁵ *When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”*

²⁶ *Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.*

²⁷ *Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”*

²⁸ *Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”*

²⁹ *Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*

³⁰ *So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?”*

³¹ *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”*

³² *Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.*

³³ *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

³⁴ *They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”*

³⁵ *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

³⁶ *But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.*

³⁷ *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*

³⁸ *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*

³⁹ *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.*

⁴⁰ *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”*

⁴¹ *So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”*

⁴² *They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”*

⁴³ *Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves.*

⁴⁴ *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*

⁴⁵ *It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—*

⁴⁶ *not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.*

⁴⁷ *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.*

⁴⁸ *I am the bread of life.*

⁴⁹ *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.*

⁵⁰ *This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.*

I am the bread of life. This Bread from heaven is mentioned 6 times in this portion of Scripture. V: 32, 33, 35, 41, 48 and V: 51.

Being mentioned this many times must mean that it's got to be important. So let's dive in and see where the Word of God takes us today.

God put into every single one of us a natural desire to eat. If we didn't eat or drink, we'd die. Therefore, within the human body is a trigger that throughout the day says, EAT SOMETHING! If you've ever had or been around new born babies, you see this in action. They can't talk and express their need for food. They just start crying or screaming until you give them what they need and want.

Our spiritual lives are the same. Within each of us is this desire for a relationship with God, that "God shaped hole" as some people call it. Most of the world does not recognize what it is or how to satisfy it. They try to fill that void by buying things, experiencing exciting events, by finding some relationship to fill it, but always find themselves very disappointed instead. But as we study this out today I trust that you'll have a better understanding and desire to be satisfied by the only ONE who promises to give it.

This is the Gospel, realizing that Christ is the only one who can truly satisfy our deepest longings and bring contentment to our lives.

Let's look at the word "Bread": it's found throughout the entire Bible. The first time the word is used is in Gen. 3:19. This is after Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God cursed the serpent, told Eve that because of what they did there would be pain in childbirth and strife in their marriages.

To Adam, the ground was cursed, thorns and thistles would grow and that people would have to work hard to provide for themselves. Here's what God said. **PP Genesis 3:19** *"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*

PP I looked up that word "bread" in the Hebrew and it means: *food (for man or beast), fruit, loaf, meat, and even victuals.*

In my mind, whenever I hear the word "bread", I immediately think of a loaf that you could buy at any store.

PP And when we look at the meaning in the New Testament we'll see that the word does mean: *bread or loaf*, and nothing more.

If you study different cultures around the world you notice one thing that is consistent: they all have one food that if they don't eat, they will be hungry in a few minutes, even if they eat a lot of what was before them. For example: The Red Karen people that Helen and I worked with in

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Thailand had to have rice with each meal. One evening I invited a few of my friends over to have pizza and then homemade brownies for dessert. The first thing they did was peel the cheese off. They hated it. Other than that they said it was tasty. After we had brownies and hot chocolate, played Uno and were sitting around talking, one of the guys mentioned that he was hungry. I asked him why and he said that it was that he didn't have any rice with the pizza.

Other cultures have to have flat bread with their meal or they go away hungry. I have a friend that went to Thailand with us and he was so happy the day the committee asked him and his wife to move to New Guinea. He was and is still a meat and potato guy. Rice was not his thing, and found himself always hungry. In New Guinea they have potatoes as their main staple.

To understand the meaning of what Jesus was saying here, that He was the Bread of Life, we need to look back into the Old Testament. You'll remember that last week Pastor Tim explained that "I AM" referred to God's covenantal name, Yahweh, speaking of His self-sufficiency and being the Self-Existent One. He does not need anything in order to exist.

We on the other hand, in order to exist physically, need food and water. And as we look at Verses 30-34, we see the Self-Existent One providing for His children. **John 6:30-34** *"So they said to him, 'Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?'"*

³¹ *"Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*

³² *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven."*

³³ *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*

³⁴ *They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."*

What was sustaining the Israelites those 40 years in the wilderness? Was it not the bread from Heaven? Each morning they would go out into the fields and collect the amount of manna that they would need for that day only. But on Friday, they would collect a double portion. What would happen if they collected too much and tried to save it for the next day? It would rot. God their Father was supplying their physical needs each and every day. This manna was a picture or type of Christ. As the manna supplied nourishment and sustain strength to the Children of Israel, so Jesus provides eternal nourishment and sustaining strength for every day.

Going on in V:35, Jesus was trying to move the conversation from the physical to the eternal. But these folks are a lot like us, they/we don't get it. Look at **John 6:41-42** *"So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"*

Sometimes we hear or read a portion of Scripture and we struggle with believing it. Like this, for example. How can we come to Jesus and believe in Him and never be hungry or thirsty ever again? It doesn't make sense.

But Jesus has moved from the physical to the eternal. Yes, our physical bodies will always need food in order to live. He's speaking about that desire we all have for relationship, acceptance and love that is eternal, yet present today and what helps us live each day. Where can we go to find that? Jesus said that He is that sustainer of life, the provider of all that we will need now and forever. He says that "whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

What is it that keeps people going after 40 years, 50 years of living this Christian life? It's realizing where the sustaining power comes from. If you are here today and are looking for that love, acceptance and the sustaining power to live each day with purpose, then look no further than this portion of Scripture.

John 6:37-40 *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

What is hindering you from accepting this salvation, strength and sustaining life? Is it fear that you may not do it right? Or that, you could never live up to the "standard"? Or that you are afraid of what your friends might say? Living a life pleasing to Christ and the Father is always worth it.

We sing a song that reflects what we're trying to get across today

PP Your Great Name

Lost are saved find their way, at the sound of Your great Name
All condemned feel no shame, at the sound of Your great Name
Ev'ry fear has no place, at the sound of Your great Name
The enemy he has to leave, at the sound of Your great Name

PP V:2

All the weak find their strength, at the sound of Your great Name
Hungry souls receive grace, at the sound of Your great Name
The fatherless find their rest, at the sound of Your great Name
The sick are healed the dead are raised, at the sound of Your great Name

To sum up all that we've talked about today let's put it down in 5 points

- 1) **PP** By equating Himself as the **Bread of Life**, Jesus is saying that **HE is the only one who truly satisfies** the essential need for our daily spiritual life. Not just the perceived needs we think we have. Sometimes what we think we need is not what we truly need.
- 2) **PP** The life Jesus is talking about is **not physical but eternal**. Jesus was trying to get us to stop focusing on the physical realm but move into the spiritual realm. In this portion they were looking to have their physical needs met by coming to Jesus and having Him provide more food for them, or some miracle. But Jesus is taking them from that into the spiritual.
- 3) **PP** When Jesus used the word **"I AM"**, he was making another statement concerning His deity. Basically **claiming to be God the Son, sent from heaven by God the Father**.
- 4) **PP** Notice the words **"come" and "believe."** This is an invitation for those listening to place their faith in Jesus. If you study the book of John, you will see this same invitation many times throughout the book. He is calling us to follow Him.
- 5) **PP** And finally the words **"hunger and thirst."** We learned today that Jesus is not talking about alleviating physical hunger and thirst, but an eternal or spiritual hunger. This is brought out in Jesus' sermon on the mount in **PP Matthew 5:6** *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."*

When Jesus says that those who come to him will never hunger and those who believe in Him will never thirst, He is saying He will satisfy our hunger and thirst to be made righteous in the sight of God.

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Whether you are young or old, we must all believe these words. Jesus said that if we come to Him we will be fully satisfied and will have our need for a love relationship met and find significance in being blessed by the best, as some people have said. Trying to find it in any other form, either in acquiring things or in relationships with other people we will be disappointed.

Let us pursue hard after Christ and allow Him to bring complete satisfaction to our soul.

Amen? Amen!