

August 20, 2006  
Pentecost 11

*"Jesus the Bread of Life"*

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### JOHN 6:24-35

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**O**nce the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. <sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." <sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." <sup>30</sup> So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" <sup>31</sup> Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." <sup>35</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

It was the best bread I have ever tasted in my life. It was made from hard red Durham wheat grown on the high plains of Colorado without irrigation, stressed out and exploding with flavor. The wheat was freshly ground into flour, mixed with ingredients and then baked to perfection. My mouth still waters when I think of biting into that piece of whole bread hot out of the oven, and covered with melted butter.

We love our bread whether fresh baked in loaves, hot out of the pizza oven, flattened into a tortilla, or pasta covered with tomato sauce, or hot cinnamon rolls, or baked into pies. As long as people have lived on this earth they have enjoyed eating bread in various different forms and shapes. Martin Luther said, "We Germans drink our bread," referring to the way beer is made from different grains.

Bread has been called "the staff of life." Bread contains the energy of the sun, the rain, the soil, the farmer who plants it and harvests it, the miller who grounds it, the baker who bakes it with the heat of the oven. It all comes together in the form of bread that brings life. Even our Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." The Atkins diet succeeded momentarily in getting people to stay away from bread. Eventually we all come back to our love for bread.

In the words just read to you the people in Galilee were pursuing Jesus because they saw him take five little barley loaves along with two small fish and turn them into enough food to feed 5000 people. If Jesus could take five little barley loaves and turn them into enough food for 5000 people, just think of the variety of breads he could provide people, and even

meat, and homes and protection from cruel oppressors such as the Roman government. People are still looking to Jesus today to improve their life here on this earth, bring peace to this world and help them find meaning within themselves. Very few want Jesus as the Bread of Life who gives eternal life to people through his suffering and death for sin on a blood stained cross.

Today, this morning, here in this worship service, dear Christian you are coming to have your hunger satisfied. You want to feed yourself on Jesus the Bread of life. Let's listen to him talk to the people of his time and then apply these words as he speaks to us about being the Bread of Life.

### **The bread of this life perishes**

The problem with bread is that it perishes with time. Take the best bread you ever tasted. Leave it sit on the counter for a week and eventually it will perish, usually covered with mold.

The large crowd that followed Jesus was looking for bread that would perish. They were not seeing Jesus as the Bread of Life who could give them life with God that would last forever. Oh, how they ran after Jesus. They even got into boats and rowed across the Sea of Galilee. When they found Jesus they said, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" They wanted to put a lock on Jesus, hold him tight and make him their king who could provide them bread and a whole lot more. If you feed a stray cat meowing in your backyard the stray cat will gladly call your home its home. Stop feeding it and it will go somewhere else. People will follow Jesus, run after him, embrace him and support him as long as he gives them what they want, not what they need.

Listen now to how Jesus helps these people as he has compassion for them and sees how lost they are with their misplaced priorities in life. "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw the miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you." The Lord said something similar through the prophet Isaiah when he said, "Why spend money on what is not bread, your labor on what does not satisfy." When you buy food in the market do you ever check the expiration date? Or what about that old bottle of ketchup that has been in the fridge for months? You look at the date and throw it away because you don't want to get sick from something that is spoiled.

Everything around you has an expiration date on it. How about that car that has over 150 K miles? It is going to expire some day just as the car that has only 15 K miles on it. What about your home, your carpet in your living room, your pet, your favorite pair of jeans? Everything in life has an expiration date on it. That includes the people that you love who will someday no longer be with you because they die, or move away, or lose interest in you as their friend. It includes the health of your body. It even includes your own life here on this earth. How true are the words of Ecclesiastes, "All go to the same place, all come from dust, and to dust all return." And yet people pursue this life and what it offers as if it will last forever. They do not want to think about what the future will bring.

The crowd that followed Jesus was totally confused about what was most important in life.

It reminds me of the man who attended a political convention with a large button on his shirt with the letters on them, "B.A.I.K."

When he met people and talked with them, it did not take long for them to ask what the letters "B.A.I.K" stood for. He told them, "Boy, Am I Confused." When told that confused is spelled with a "C" instead of a "K" the man responded, "You don't know how confused I am." That was the crowd that followed Jesus, totally confused about who he really was and the bigger blessings of eternal life with God that Jesus had to offer them.

"B.A.I.K." Boy am I confused. How often don't we have to admit this truth about ourselves. We get so wrapped up in the perishable things of life that have no real value. We lose sight of the important things of life that we have in Jesus that last forever. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Jesus had to tell us, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses." It is easy to see people around us loving the daily bread the Lord gives including the luxuries of this life more than God. Then we look inside and see the same misplaced priorities in our own lives. The words of Romans 2 come to mind, "You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other you are condemning yourself." It is OK to enjoy the fresh bread that comes out of the oven, or the rose that beautifies the garden, or the homes in which we live as blessings from the hand of God as long as these things with an expiration date on them do not become more important than Jesus.

### **Jesus lasts forever**

What did Jesus want these people to pursue? He wanted them to believe in him as the Bread of Life and to value him more than the bread that he provided for them. That is why he told the people, "Work for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you." Notice how Jesus refers to himself as "The Son of Man" not the Son of God. Every time Jesus does this he wants us to think of how he came down to this earth as one of us, took our sins about himself, suffered for us and died in our place. That's the real food that lasts. These are the blessings that give us eternal life. Jesus said of himself, "On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." The Father placed his seal of approval on what Jesus did to rescue us. He spoke from heaven at Jesus baptism and at his transfiguration, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." The Father also raised Jesus to life again putting his seal of approval on what Jesus accomplished for us.

I am holding in my hand a water bottle. I know that this water is OK to drink because it is still sealed. We place seals on our bottles and jars because we do not want someone tampering with our food or water and poisoning us. I am holding in my hand another bottle. This bottle had some water in it, and then to the water was added some dirty water. Would you like to drink this? When I look at the life I have lived, it has been polluted by sin. Even if I try to add some good to the bad I have done, it only increases the corruption, because I am adding more imperfection to what is already imperfect. Jesus lived the perfect life for you. Died the perfect to pay for your sin. The Father put his seal on that perfect life of Jesus. All that is left for you to do is to take this free gift of eternal life. That is what Jesus meant when he said, "Work for the food that endures to eternal life."

But wait a minute. You mean I have to do something to eat the Bread of Life just as I have to take a piece of fresh bread someone gives me and put it into my mouth? Yes, that is true, but here is where God's goodness to us goes beyond what we can imagine. He enables us to believe and accept and make this as our own. The people asked, "What must we do to do the works of God requires?" They asked what they had to do to get this Bread of Life. Notice the answer, "The work of God is this to believe in one he has sent." Not only is the Bread of Life a gift of God, but the ability to believe and accept this and eat it and make it our own is also a gift from God.

Do the people jump up and down for joy when they hear about Jesus as the Bread of Life? No the opposite is true. They said to Jesus, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you?" They wanted more miracles similar to what had happened the miracle of manna from heaven. When you present people with Jesus the Bread of Life and tell them this is totally free without cost, they will either joyfully accept this or they will act as these people who said, "Show us more proof that this is true?"

What does Jesus do to help these people believe in him? He tells them about the true bread that comes down from heaven. It was not the manna that came to the people in the desert, but the true bread the heavenly Father gives to the whole world. When the people asked Jesus, "Sir, from now on give us this bread," Jesus responds with these life changing words, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never grow hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Dear Christian, the best bread in the world, the best tasting food, the best blessings, the best marriage, the best family, the best friends, the best job- - None can compare to Jesus the bread of life who enables you to never be hungry. You have tasted his love and his blessings. Every day you want more and more. Jesus is Your Bread of Life. Amen.