

**August 27, 2006**  
**Pentecost 12**

*"Jesus the Bread from Heaven"*

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### **JOHN 6:41-51**

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*At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup> They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" <sup>43</sup> "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. <sup>44</sup> "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup> No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." <sup>52</sup> Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup> Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Inside of this bag I have a loaf of bread. If I let you glance at it quickly I think that you can recognize from the bag what brand this is even without reading the label. You guessed correctly. This is the familiar white bread called "Wonder Bread." Why would they ever call such a bland highly refined ordinary white bread "Wonder Bread?" For years the advertising for this bread has stated: "It is no surprise that Wonder is America's favorite bread. So soft, so delicious, so fresh. For over 80 years Wonder Bread has helped America build strong bodies. It provides essential vitamins and minerals—an important part of your family's healthy diet. So give 'em what they need... Wonder."

What if there were an actual wonder bread or miracle bread that people could eat to cure their health problems and even extend their lives on this earth? If such a life saving bread did exist people with cancer, diabetes, heart disease and other problems would stand in line for hours to buy such bread. Even at \$100 a loaf, it would be worth it to have a food that restored you back to health and made you feel 10 times better, and even made you live longer.

In the words just read to you, Jesus makes the exclusive claim for himself that he is the bread that has come down from heaven. He is the bread from heaven because he is true God from all eternity and he alone can give people eternal life. You would think there would be cars lining up on Blosser Road just to eat this bread from heaven that can give eternal life. You would think this church would be overflowing and people would be sitting on chairs outside the windows just to hear the message about this bread from heaven. You have come here hungry, hungry for love, hungry for God's love in your life. Here in this worship service at this moment and time in history we are privileged to feed together on

Jesus the true Bread come down from heaven.

### **This bread from heaven is true God**

If there is one thing that causes people to gag and choke and even toss their cookies, it is the teaching in the Bible that Jesus is the true bread that comes down from heaven, Lord and God and from all eternity. Listen to how the crowd of people grumbled when they heard Jesus make this claim for himself. "At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.'" The original Greek word for grumble is the word "gogguzo" which is a word that sounds like what it means, this gurgling sound deep in the throat as people complain about what Jesus said.

With the words, "I am the bread of life" and "I am the bread come down from heaven" Jesus is making the claim for himself that he is actually God. Not only does Jesus reference himself as the Bread from Heaven come down from God, but he even says "I am" using a designation for Jehovah God. When Moses was worried that the people would not accept his message, the Lord simply told him, "Just say to them, 'I am' sent you." Jesus speaks of himself in this exclusive way with language used only for God. It was not the only time Jesus used the expression "I am" to say something great about himself.

The people grumbled when they heard Jesus say this about himself. They knew him as the carpenter's son from Nazareth, with a very nice mother whose name was Mary and a father whose name was Joseph. They knew Jesus as the talk of the town because he was so nice, but the people never talked about him as Lord and God. They could not even begin to fathom how he could make the claim for himself, "I came down from heaven." It has often been said that there are only four things you can believe about Jesus. You can join up with the camp that believes he was a liar, a man who ran around claiming he was God. Or you can join with those who say he was a legend similar to the story about a large ape like creature in the Northwest. Or you can join those who claim he was delusional, out of touch with reality, mentally ill, a lunatic. Or you can accept what the Bible says about Jesus Christ that he is the Bread from heaven, Lord and God from all eternity.

I read a sermon recently where someone made the statement, "Unbelief is our inherited eating disorder." Every since Adam and Eve ate from the tree in the Garden, people born into this world are born hostile to believing Jesus Christ could be who he says he is. Those who don't believe in Christ get sick to their stomach when they hear the claims that he is Lord and God. They gag on the teaching that Jesus is true bread come down from heaven. It was the fruit eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil that brought eternal death into the world. It is Jesus the bread of heaven that gives eternal life to all people. He wants all to come to him and be saved and live forever.

We were born with a hunger and longing for something in this life that cannot be filled by eating bread, or fruit or vegetables. It is a hunger for God, for what some have described as transcendence, this feeling of being close to God and with God. It is part of weakened nature to believe that this hunger can be satisfied with material blessings of this life. For a while we feel full and satisfied and then we hunger again. So we try other things to stave off the hunger in the soul. We try relationships with people, but they don't always last do they? We try being good, the best person we can be, but we find ourselves falling short of

God's expectations and even our own. We get hungry because we don't like what we see in ourselves when we hurt other people, or use bad language, or waste our time away, or fail to be there for others as we should. This hunger in the soul, this longing for God is portrayed for us in Psalm 42 where it says, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Where can I go and meet with God?" The hunger can only be satisfied when we come to Jesus the bread that comes down to us from heaven. Nothing on this earth will satisfy. It will only cause us to perish.

What does Jesus do with the people who want to spit him out the way a person may spit out a piece of moldy bread? Jesus reaches out to them with his love and talks more about himself. He says, "No one can come to me unless the Father sent me draws him." The word for "draw" is used to describe dragging a net through the water, dragging a person to prison, or pulling a sword out of its sheath. By myself I will always think that Jesus is nothing, nothing but moldy bread that needs to be thrown out in the trash. Then the Father, the heavenly Father, pulls me and draws me to the words of Jesus such as "I am the bread of life." He draws me and pulls me and leads me to believe in something that I once thought was foolish. Recall the night Jesus appeared personally to Thomas and showed him the nail marks in his hands and told Thomas, "Stop doubting and believe." The words of Jesus and evidence in his hands led him to say with confidence, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus pulls these people towards him with words, words of love as he describes his relationship to the Father. First he reminds them of how the Old Testament prophets spoke of a time when the Father would teach the people about the Messiah. "It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me." What an amazing claim Jesus makes for himself. He is saying that if you listen to what the heavenly Father says to you in the Old Testament you will hear the Father talking about Jesus his Son. Again, going back the night when Jesus appeared to his disciples on the day of his resurrection. It says in Luke 24 that he opened the minds so they could understand the Scriptures and see him as their Lord and God. In his book *Born Again* Charles Colson tells how he set out to find evidence in the Bible that Jesus was not really God as his friend was claiming. He took a legal pad, beginning writing down everything that pertained to Jesus as being a man on one side and everything about him as God on another side. After the research had been done he was drawn to believe Jesus Lord and God, the true bread from heaven.

Oh, dear Christians, read on in this text and see even more how Jesus pulls at these people with cords of love and wants to pull them to believe in him. He speaks openly and freely about his heavenly Father. "No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father." The book of John records numerous conversations in which Jesus speaks about his relationship to the Father as someone close to the Father from all eternity. It was Jesus who said "I and the Father are one." Last week I read an article in Newsweek magazine where Billy Graham described the close love and friendship he has with his wife Ruth. I said to myself, "Wow what amazing love." When Jesus talks to people and to us this morning about seeing the heavenly Father and being close with him from all eternity, it leads us to believe he is the Bread of Heaven, our Lord and God, in whom we need to put our trust for eternal life.

## **This bread from heaven gives eternal life**

Jesus tells us so clearly that through him we can have eternal life. "I tell you the truth, he who believes in me has everlasting life." Notice it does not say, "will have eternal life" but it says, "has eternal life." Believing in Christ means to trust what he has done to rescue you and save you from everlasting punishment and death. Jesus says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." Jesus is like a loaf of bread that you eat that allows you to live forever. You put it to your mouth, bite off a piece of the bread, chew on it carefully, swallow it and digest it. It becomes part of you. With saving faith giving to us by the Holy Spirit we take Jesus and make him part of our lives. Jesus said, "This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." In his flesh, on his body, Jesus suffered for the sin of the world. When we take that suffering for Christ for us to ourselves in faith and literally consume it and make it our own, it bring us life.

The best bread in the world cannot keep you from facing God in the final judgment and answering for your sin. Even the manna in the desert given to God's people did not keep them from dying. "Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died." On the Central Coast we have a man who has eaten fresh fruits and vegetables and exercised all his life. His name is Jack Lallane. He even sells a juicer that can help you be healthier. As healthy as he is, Jack Lallane is going to die. Nothing can keep us from facing God on judgment day. All of us must die. With Jesus we can live forever after we die. That is our great hope. It is the background for everything we do each day and each week here on this earth. "If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever." What a blessing we have in Jesus the bread from heaven! Amen.