

“Are You Hungry?”—John 6:33-35

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Are You Hungry?”, is John 6:33-35 → Jesus said: *“The bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”* They said to Him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” 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.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Can you relate to the following scenario?

Worship is over and you desire to “go out” to eat. Your spouse or friend may ask you, “Where would you like to go eat?”

“I don’t care. You pick.”

“OK. How about we go to McDonalds?”

“McDonalds? Nah, I don’t feel like McDonalds.”

“Well then, what do you feel like? You choose.”

“I don’t know. What do you have a taste for today?”

“I don’t know. How about Mexican?”

“Nah, that doesn’t sound good either.” . . . and so it continues.

This dialog is a commentary on our lives in general. We have an

appetite—we know we’re hungry—but we’re not quite sure what we’re hungry for. I guess it would depend upon the cause of your hunger. For instance, you can be hungry as a result of putting off eating to the point of saying, “I’m starving! What’s to eat?”, willing to eat most anything. You may think you’re hungry and eat “comfort food” in an effort to fill an emotional void in your life, usually eating but never being satisfied. Hunger can also result from malnutrition—not having enough food to eat. In such a situation one may not be able to recognize hunger or a need for food at all. Malnutrition leaves one helpless, needing someone else to provide nutrition.

While “hunger” can be the result of various dynamics of life, generally it is a desire to be filled with something which “satisfies.” While we usually think of an appetite as focusing on food your appetite actually goes much deeper than food. It can include any desire which may consume you at any given moment; physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual. There is much more to “hunger” than simply a desire to be filled with food. It is the desire to be **completely satisfied**. Scripture uses the picture of “hunger and thirst” to describe the desire for food and water (cf. Nehemiah 9:15) as well as the desire for a righteousness (cf. Matthew 6:33) which frees you from the guilt of your sin. Jesus used it in our text to describe eternal life in relationship with Himself in view of the Last Day.

The people Jesus encountered in our text were “hungry” as a result

of having experienced a miracle which He had performed with two fish and five loaves of bread. He used them to feed five thousand people. (cf. John 6:1-13) John 6:14 says: *When the people saw the sign that He had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"* They immediately recognized the miracle and apparently thought Jesus was the new Moses based on the promise in the Old Testament Scriptures. (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Acts 3:22; 7:37) Ironically they had a "hunger" for the coming of this promised "Prophet" but had no idea how superficial their hunger.

In one sense, Jesus was telling them that they were "spiritually malnourished." When the people sought out Jesus they did so on the basis of the sign which He performed when they ate their *fill of the loaves*. (cf. John 6:26) When He directed their focus and "hunger" toward faith in Himself they immediately demanded another sign, referring to the manna which Moses provided for the people of Israel in the wilderness. (cf. John 6:27-31) The faith which feeds on signs is an appetite that grows by that on which it feeds. Thus, it cannot rest in the revelation of the given sign but demands another sign, and another, and another, and so on. True faith is trust in the Christ Whom that sign reveals on the basis of God's written Word in humble recognition of "spiritual malnourishment." I am a sinner in need of what only Jesus, the Bread of Life, can bestow—forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Jesus says in verse 33 of our text: *The bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.* He is not speaking about a life in this present world tainted by sin as it is. It cannot completely satisfy the human appetite tainted by sin as it also is. Ever know someone who was completely happy in this life, free from depression, guilt and discontentment? Ever know someone who was so upset or angry that he ate himself into oblivion? You don't have look very far to see that this world will not be filled with what Jesus refers to as *the food that endures to eternal life*, which only He can give you. (cf. John 6:27) It looks beyond this world.

Thus Jesus' promise to you in verse 35 of our text: *I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.* How can Jesus make such a promise? It echoes His promise to the woman at the well that *whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.* (cf. John 4:14) Like the people in our text she too could not help but respond to such a promise with *Sir, give me this water.*

Face it: On the basis of what Jesus is saying, who of us wouldn't respond in the same way: *Sir, give us this bread **always**?* (cf. Verse 34) After all, isn't perfection with total contentment, happiness and peace what people are constantly searching for by their "pursuit of happiness"

through materialism, by their constantly justifying their actions in an effort to remove guilt and looking for people to act appropriately toward them expressed in their own self-righteous judgments? It reveals just how serious our spiritual malnourishment in this world is because of our sin.

Throughout this discourse Jesus kept saying that such an appetite can only be given, not obtained. *The food that endures to eternal life is **given** to you by Jesus.* (cf. John 6:27) Even faith to trust in Jesus' atoning work for the forgiveness of your sins when He gave His *flesh . . . for the life of the world* (cf. John 6:51) on the cross is a gift to you. He says in John 6:44 → *No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.* Faith is not simply knowing the history about Jesus. Rather, it is completely trusting in Him for the forgiveness of your sins, having all your "hungers" in life quieted as you look forward to being raise up on the Last Day.

It is on the Last Day that you will receive the fulness of eternal life through faith in the Person & Work of Jesus. It will happen in the world to come, the new heavens and new earth within which righteousness dwells. (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-13) The description of eternal life in this world to come is given us in the vision of Revelation 7:16-17. There it says: *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore . . . the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.* Notice,

this happens when Jesus raises you up on the Last Day when you will receive a new glorified body and never physically hunger or thirst in eternal life.

Meanwhile, you don't live life expecting it to give you what it is not built to give: complete and total contentment, peace, perfection, joy, happiness and so forth. Instead of striving to fulfill the desires of our sinful appetites we strive to fulfill the desires of God's Will according to His Word as we struggle with the presence of those sinful desires daily in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit we too strive to resist the devil's temptations to lead us away from the Bread of Life in Jesus by clinging to the Word Jesus used against satan in the wilderness: *It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* (cf. Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4)

Are you hungry? Are you troubled? Are you guilt-ridden? Are you struggling inwardly? Jesus's promise in John 6:37 is for you: *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me **I will never cast out.*** Thus, it is there that in your turmoil you will find *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding which will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (cf. Philippians 4:7) You will even be able to rejoice in *the sufferings of this present time* because *they are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* (cf. Romans 5:3; 8:18) You will not despair, grow weary or lose hope because *you are from God*

and have overcome them, for He Who is in you (i.e. Jesus) is greater than he who is in the world (i.e. the devil).

These are the promises of God's written Word for you sealed in the Person & Work of Bread of Life, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit's power. You have the privilege to feed on His Word daily and daily bask in His forgiveness and grace given you in your baptism. You have the privilege to feed on that grace and forgiveness as He comes to you in His body and blood of the Lord's Supper. You get to experience His forgiveness of sins in worship with others who will be raised on the Last Day to experience their hunger and thirst **completely satisfied**, as you confess: "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen." (The Nicene Creed)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

(2 Corinthians 1:2)

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