

“I AM . . . the Bread of Life!”—John 6:32-37

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “I AM . . . the Bread of Life!”, is John 6:32-37 → *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. For 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. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out. This is the text.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

As a staple of life bread plays an important role in our lives and not just to relieve hunger. Bread has found its place even amidst cultic rituals in various religions throughout the ages. In the Old Testament we read about Yahweh’s instructions to eat unleavened bread in connection with the Passover meal, which initiated the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasting seven more days. (cf.

Exodus 12:14-20) The manna which the LORD provided His people in the wilderness is described as the *bread from heaven* (cf. Exodus 16; Numbers 11) which sustained them for forty years. Twelve loaves of bread were placed before Yahweh in the tabernacle as a gift from the twelve tribes of Israel, signifying that He sustains His people. It was called the Bread of the Presence to be eaten only by the priests in this holy place. (cf. Leviticus 24:5-9)

So it is only fitting that Jesus would speak of Himself as *the bread of life* to which all of these uses of bread in the lives of God's people pointed. In our text Jesus taught the people about being fed and sustained in life by the LORD's gracious providence, prompted by His feeding five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two small fish. Aside from satisfying their hunger it also created another "hunger" in the people to determine Who this man was that He could perform such miraculous signs! 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 recognized Jesus as someone special, sent by God Himself! The next step was to make Him their "bread king."

However, Jesus did not come to be their "bread king." He came to be their Savior from sin. When they found Jesus on the other side of the sea of Galilee He pointed out the true nature of their search and told them: *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.

And what must we do, to be doing the works of God? Jesus says, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He has sent. (cf. John 6:27-29) He used this miracle (as He did with all His miracles) to direct them to faith in Himself as their Savior from sin.

It could be these people were on a “spiritual” search of some kind, especially having experienced a miracle, and Jesus’ words would have “wet their appetite” even more. Even though there appears to be a spiritual hunger of some kind it didn’t really reflect true faith. The old adage “seeing is believing” just didn’t work for them.

Think about it. Even after experiencing the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves of bread and twelve small fish they still demanded: *What sign do You do, that we may see and believe You? What work do You perform?* Then they placed an apparent challenge before Him: *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”* (cf. John 6:30-31) The implication in these peoples’ refusal to believe in Jesus is that the feeding of the five thousand was not enough. After all, Moses fed millions of people over a period of forty years! “Come on, Jesus. Show us a really miraculous sign!” Could He actually outdo Moses?

It is amazing how we sinners so often put God to the test, insisting that He

prove Himself worthy of our attention. It happens whenever we refuse to submit to His written Word; when things are not going our own way and we blame Him for it; when we question His authority rather than seek Him with questions in faith. However, if we were in the sandals of those people in our text we also would probably want a lot of proof of Jesus' claims about Himself. Imagine yourself speaking to a person, perhaps with whom you grew up or whose family you knew, telling you *I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.* (cf. Verse 35) It would be hard to swallow if he told you that he was *the true bread from heaven . . . the bread of God . . . Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.* (cf. Verses 32-33) Thus they demanded more and more proof to obtain a reason to *believe in Him* as the One sent from God.

It is natural for us to cling to the principle that "seeing is believing." In verse 36 of our text Jesus said to them: *I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.* God's order is different. In His order faith must be present so that we may truly see. This was the point of Jesus' words in John 9:39 → *For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.* In other words, *those who self-righteously do not see* their sin need to be "blinded" under the judgment of God's law which condemns sinners so that they may be humbled to see their need for

His forgiveness, repent of their sins, receive forgiveness in Christ and go forward in a new way of living. This is why faith in Jesus Christ is *the work of God* the Holy Spirit working through His means of grace. Jesus stated this in verse 37 of our text: *All that the **Father gives Me** will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.*

It is the nature of satan's work to keep us away from trusting **completely** in Jesus by tempting us to focus on the physical needs of life and miss our eternal needs. It is too common for many Christians to look to Jesus as He Who sustains their eternal life while thinking that it is they who control and sustain their physical life. Even their statement to Jesus in verse 34 of our text reveals their misunderstanding of Jesus' words: *Sir, give us this bread always.* While Jesus was speaking about faith they were focused on food. This is exactly how the devil worked it during his temptation of Jesus when he said to Him, *If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.* Jesus responded by quoting the written Old Testament Scriptures: *It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* (cf. Matthew 4:3-4)

When you believe in Jesus it means that you depend upon Him **totally and completely** as the **only** Source for sustenance in both physical and eternal life! When Jesus makes the assertion 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—He promises that His Person & Work is the only sufficient means through Whom you can be physically and eternally fed, sustained and satisfied. Later in this discussion Jesus spoke about us “eating His flesh” and “drinking His blood.” He was speaking about a faith which trust completely in His Person & Work in life in the midst of a discussion about a staple of life—bread! Jesus is the staple of our life.

Today is reckoned as Holy Thursday, the day upon which Jesus was arrested for claiming to be I AM—Yahweh in the flesh. However, before His arrest He instituted His supper of the new covenant and commanded us to eat His body and drink His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. How can it convey the forgiveness of sins to you? Simply because Jesus said it does and our faith clings to the promise of His Word in this sacrament. This is His body and blood simply because He says it is and our faith clings to the promise of His Word connected to this bread and cup.

When we come in repentance and faith to Jesus, *the bread of life*, we have the assurance that we are sustained with the “staple”—the sustaining and principal element—of eternal life and the power for living today! We go into the daily vocations of our life with our spiritual hunger satisfied to bring the Bread of Life to others. Amen.

We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient,

but the things that are unseen are eternal.

(2 Corinthians 4:18)

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