

The Bread That Gives Life
John 6:35, 41 – 51
August 9, 2009

³⁵ Then Jesus said, "I am the bread that gives life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

⁴¹ Some people began to complain about Jesus because he said, "I am the bread that comes down from heaven." ⁴² They said, "This is Jesus, the son of Joseph. We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

⁴³ But Jesus answered, "Stop complaining to each other. ⁴⁴ The Father is the One who sent me. No one can come to me unless the Father draws him to me, and I will raise that person up on the last day.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except the One who is from God; only he has seen the Father.⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, whoever believes has eternal life.⁴⁸ I am the bread that gives life.⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but still they died.⁵⁰ Here is the bread that comes down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will never die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give up so that the world may have life."

⁵² Then the evil people began to argue among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³ Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, you must eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood. Otherwise, you won't have real life in you. ⁵⁴ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.⁵⁵ My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.⁵⁶ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them.⁵⁷ The living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father. So whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ I am not like the bread your ancestors ate. They ate that bread and still died. I am the bread that came down from heaven and whoever eats this bread will live forever."

**This is the Word of God and It can be trusted.
Thanks be to God.**

The lectionary has set before us a five week investigation into the sixth chapter of John's gospel. During our study so far, we have seen that John's Jewish readers are well versed in scripture and that Jesus uses this to begin to teach them about TRUE LIFE. We have seen a parallel between John's gospel account of Jesus' teachings beginning with the feeding of the 5,000 and the Exodus story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Let's review briefly what we have studied so far.

In verses 1 through 21 Jesus feeds 5,000 people with just five barley loaves and two little fish offered to them by a young boy. Though the crowd as a whole has offered very little to solve the disciples' dilemma on how to feed them, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach the disciples and the crowd

that if we are faithful to give but a little, God will bless us with much; even to abundance.

Verses 22 through 25 tell us that the following day the people went looking for Jesus.

In verses 26 and 27 we read that when the people found Jesus, He told them that they didn't look for Him because of the miracle they had just experienced. Rather they came looking for Him because they wanted some more food (v. 26). Jesus told them not to work for food that perishes but for the food which would give them everlasting life. Jesus said He would give to them.

Intrigued, the people asked in verse 28, "What must we do to do the work God requires?" Jesus' response in v. 29 is very important for us to notice and understand. He replies with these words, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

Then in verse 30, we begin to see the hardness of the peoples' hearts. They asked, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" They're kidding, right? Only the day before He performed a huge miracle before them and they totally ignored it saying, "Show us something so we'll believe you". Rather than being thankful for what they had received, they are asking for more. They are even so bold as to mention how their fathers, the

Israelites, ate manna in the desert. God fed their ancestors out there for 40 years and the people now wanted Jesus to feed them all the food they wanted.

Jesus then told them that God is offering them the TRUE bread from heaven. 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; for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." In other words, Jesus is the bread that gives nourishment to the world.

Again, Jesus' words fall upon deaf ears as the crowd once again fails to hear what Jesus' is telling them. The people cried out to Him, "Sir, from now on give us this bread." "I am the bread of life," Jesus responds, "He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. We all know that no physical bread can make us full for the rest of our lives and no physical drink can quench our thirst for the rest of our lives. Jesus had promised to meet their deepest needs and yet they cannot see beyond their stomachs. So what exactly is it that Jesus is telling them? What promise is He making them?

Before we continue to look at the God's Word for us today in John chapter 6, let us pray that God will soften our hearts and open our ears to His Word and Will for our lives today. Let us pray.

O God, our resurrection & life, the promise of your new life in Christ is like a breath of fresh air in a dry & thirsty land. We have gathered as believers, & as those who are honestly seeking the truth. Guide our worship this hour.

O God who makes all things new, speak to us as whole people today. May your truth touch not just our intellects, but also our deeper yearnings of heart & soul. We bring with us our daily concerns, as well as our more eternal questions. May your new creation in us shed light upon our everyday walk.

O God who fed the multitudes with but a few loaves & some fish, feed us now with the abundance of what you freely offer, that we might overflow with your goodness right where we live. All this we pray in the name of, & because of, Jesus our Christ. Amen.

As we continue to contemplate Jesus' use of metaphor, we cannot help but be reminded of the burning bush story. When Moses asked God his name, God replied, ". . . you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you' " (Exodus 3:14). Here in chapter 6, we hear, "I am the bread of life," John's account is the first of a series of metaphors that John will bring to our attention concerning Jesus throughout his gospel.

- *I am the bread of life (6:35)*
- *I am the light of the world (8:12)*
- *I am the good shepherd (10:11)*
- *I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)*
- *I am the way the truth and the life (14:6)*
- *I am the true vine (15:1)*

Jesus, being one with the Father, is the great, "I AM," and therefore has the ability, the right, the authority, and the power to offer up to us life everlasting. He promises this to us with only one condition, and that is that we believe in the one that God has sent, that is, we put our whole faith and trust in Him.

What do you hear when Jesus says, "I am the bread that has come down from heaven?" What do you hear? Do you take this literally . . . wondering if Jesus is Whole Wheat, Multi-grain, or perhaps a loaf of sliced sour dough? Of course not; but again I ask, what do you hear? What do you hear when Jesus says that he has come down from heaven? Ah, now we have something to ponder; something to think about. Just as many believers and nonbelievers alike find themselves today, His critics amongst the crowd certainly found themselves confused about Jesus strange talk. They replied "Is this not Jesus, son of Joseph, we know his mother and father?"

It is important to note here that Jesus does not respond to their criticism or even to their question. Instead, He focuses on the heart of the issue; Faith and Knowledge of God. He says to them, "No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me . . ." Here Jesus tells us that everyone who has come to be a follower of His did so not because they decided for themselves that it was the right thing to do, but because God

our Creator, called them to. It is an act of God that brings us to follow the way of Christ Jesus. So what is mean by the Faith and Knowledge of God?

Consider for a moment the word *faith*. What does it mean exactly? Dictionary.com tells us that faith is a noun which has several meanings, such as the confidence or trust in a person or thing; *faith in another's ability* or a belief that is not based on proof; *He had faith that the hypothesis would be substantiated by fact*. Pastor and author Jim Love challenges us to put aside our understanding of *faith* as a noun and to look at it through our understanding of Jesus. In doing so, he says that *faith* is no longer a noun, but rather a verb.

Continuing with Jim's line of thought, let's look at another key word to Christianity. Let's look at, "Believe". When we say, "I believe"? What do we mean by that? Do we mean, holding to a set of ideas ... "I believe in God" meaning, "I think there is a God." I believe Jesus rose from the dead." Meaning, I think he rose from the dead." No, that would be a misunderstanding of the word "believe".

Faith and *belief* are not about ideas so much as they are about a way of life. According to the Biblical witness and the witness of the church, to believe, is to live a certain way. Just as with the word "faith". It means something active. It is not just about ideas, but rather about doing & being. To follow Jesus is to live by faith; to *believe* means to respond to God in a way that helps us to make changes that will reflect in our lives. It must be

reflected in how we live our lives, in how we treat one another, in how we choose to encourage each other and to foster a sense of belonging and acceptance amongst this Community of Faith and amongst all those we encounter.

Just a few weeks ago, someone brought to my attention that they had been inviting people to visit our New Day. One particular individual they invited, and I don't know who this person was, had not responded well to the invitation. It is my understanding that they knew me in the past, about 10 years or so ago, and based on what they knew of me then, they did not feel they could look to me as a spiritual leader. Folks, I am here today to tell you that no one should look to me as their spiritual leader. I am not here to offer you spirituality or to offer you life. I am here, however, to tell you about one who is mightier than I and has the ability to meet your every need.

I am far from being perfect and I know that I have made many mistakes in my life, some of which I am reminded of every day of my life while others I have been able to pack away with the help of God's grace and mercy. Mankind is nothing more than mortal; unable to do anything apart from the love and grace of God. We are, however, able to be made new. We are able to be forged, shaped and used as an instrument of God for carrying out His plan and His will.

Not so long ago, J.R. sent me a great presentation about God's ability to use us. It read's something like this:

The next time you feel like God can't use you, just remember: Noah was a drunk, Abraham was too old, Isaac was a daydreamer, Jacob was a liar, Leah was ugly, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Gideon was afraid, Samson had long hair and was a womanizer, Jeremiah and Timothy were too young, David had an affair and was a murderer, Elijah was suicidal, Isaiah preached naked, Jonah ran from God, Naomi was a widow, Job went bankrupt, Peter denied Christ, the disciples fell asleep while praying, Martha worried about everything, the Samaritan woman was divorced (more than once), Zacchaeus was too small, Paul was too religious, Timothy had an ulcer and Lazarus was DEAD!

God helped them all! Jesus helped them all. In our scripture reading today the crowd was unable to understand what Jesus was telling them about the bread of life. Amongst all the metaphors and direct teaching, Jesus was simply telling them that He is the bread that gives life. We are able to do nothing on our own and of our own strength. Without the bread that gives life we are able to do nothing to honor and glorify our Creator. We can try and we will fail. Let me remind you once again that I am not the

message. You are not the message. We are but the messengers. And so I leave you with 10 things to consider about God.

1. *God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.*
2. *There is no key to happiness. The door is always open.*
3. *Silence is often misinterpreted but never misquoted.*
4. *Do the math .. count your blessings.*
5. *Faith is the ability to not panic.*
6. If you're worried, you didn't pray. If you prayed, don't worry.
7. As a child of God, prayer is kind of like calling home everyday.
8. *The most important things in your house are the people.*
9. *When we get tangled up in our problems, be still. God wants us to be still so He can untangle the knot.*
10. *A grudge is a heavy thing to carry.*

How many of us are holding on to a grudge today? How many of us have been hurt by a loved one or have been given some news about our own health or the health of someone we love. Maybe the grudge we hold is against ourselves. We have all made mistakes in our lives and have found ourselves suffering because of some poor choice that we have made. Maybe we suffer physically, or emotionally or maybe even spiritually. Regardless of the grudges we carry today, won't you let go of them. If you are able to correct a circumstance, then correct it. If you are not able to, then take ownership of it; but please do not carry a burden of guilt or shame because of it. Trust in the Lord today to deliver you from your bondage, whatever it may be. Jesus has said that He came down from Heaven to carry out the Will of His Father, not to carry out His own plan. "Here is what the One who

sent me wants me to do," Jesus says, "I must not lose even one whom God gave me, but I must raise them all on the last day. Those who see the Son and *believe* in Him have eternal life, and I will raise them on the last day. This is what my father wants."

Jesus Christ our Redeemer has said that we have only to believe in the one that God has sent. Jesus has promised to accept all those that come to Him. He has not made that promise for a few, or for some, or for many who come; but for *all* those who come to Him. Won't you come to Him today? Won't you come for the one that gives life today; for the one that has promised to accept you? Won't you come? Amen!