

July 12, 2009
Jesus, the Bread of Life
Scripture: John 6:1-35; Isaiah 55:1-3a
Pastor Ron Harris.

Diana sent me this quote from “the Word in the Neighborhood.” “Everyone is hungry for life. Going to parties, spending time with our families, heading to the mall, watching and playing sports, climbing the corporate ladder, watching TV, listening to music, even using alcohol and other drugs - all of these pursuits are often the means we use to satisfy our desires, the ongoing hunger for life. But, if we are really honest with ourselves, these things eventually lose that edge and the perfect flavor to satisfy and fulfill. Truthfully, we need something much more substantial and everlasting. **Jesus told the people that He Himself was the bread of life that would satisfy their hunger.** They could search anywhere and everywhere for something else to meet those needs, but those searches were, and even today are, doomed to fail. Only God can meet our deepest hungers, our desire for life at its fullest. He is as basic to Spiritual life as bread is to our physical life. The great French physicist and philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote that each person has a vacuum inside that only God can fill – it is God-shaped. Try as we may with all these other activities, objects, and even people, none of them can satisfy for long. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, the living Bread of Life, can do that.”

Bread. You can get bread anywhere - at the nearby bagel shop, even as bowls for clam chowder - you're options here in the 21st century are endless. The popularity of bread makers at home are soaring, bread seems to be on everyone's taste buds along with a cup of coffee. In India bread comes in many forms, we love Naan and Chapati's especially. The important thing though is not breads size or shape, just the ingredients and the taste. Bread is the foundation of the food pyramid (remember, the five food groups?) So when Jesus said He was the bread of life, He tried to get people to see how important He is to their spiritual welfare. In south India only the rich eat bread, rice is their staple. If Jesus would have taught there I think he may have referred to himself as the rice of life! **When we invite people to think about Jesus, we invite them to the source of spiritual food that can satisfy them now and for all time.**

Jesus made this claim to be the bread of life after he had fed the 5000 from 5 small barley loaves and 2 small fish. *Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."* - John 6:11-12 In Chapter 6, were told that the people flocked to Jesus because they had seen the miracles He had performed. Then at a certain time He tried to rest with His disciples but the people kept after him and wouldn't leave. So Jesus challenged His disciples with a totally impossible assignment: find enough food to feed the people (see verse 5). It was hopeless. They didn't have enough money and their only offer of help came from a boy. It was ridiculous to think the boy

and his basket could do any good, but Jesus had other plans. After the people sat down, Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish and thanked God for them. As the food was being passed around, the basket stayed full - it continued to multiply. And in the end, they ate as much as they wanted - in fact, it took twelve baskets to hold the leftovers. (verse 13). **Jesus demonstrated His eternal powers of creation right there on that sandy beach. Just as we saw him show his powers of creation in turning the water into wine last week, this scripture shows his compassion on those who flocked around Him that afternoon.** He took what was offered to Him and used it to feed the hungry people and to point out His power and importance. The crowd were so impressed that they wanted to make Jesus king right there on the spot. They were looking for a leader to overthrow the current Roman government.

But Jesus desiring to take some time to pray withdrew to the mountain to pray. The disciples went by boat to the western side of the Sea of Galilee. However, they ran into a storm. **Still the disciples do not really understand his power. When Jesus comes to them walking on water they were terrified.** With Him on board, they made port at Capernaum. Again it was impossible to escape the crowds which were now following Jesus hoping to receive another free meal. *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves of bread and had your fill."* - John 6:26. They were chasing Him because He had fed them - **they wanted something that was temporary, not spiritual.** Belief for the crowd was reduced to, "What God can do for me?" Jesus was seeking a people who would ask, "what can I do for God?"

Jesus gives eternal food. *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.* - John 6:27 Jesus took this moment to make a real strong point. It's possible to dedicate one's life to "food that spoils", that is, for purely physical goals and satisfactions. Jesus said that it was a waste of time because no matter how good it looks or tastes it will rot. It wouldn't provide lasting satisfaction, but only temporary pleasure. On the other hand, it is possible to pursue "food that endures to eternal life". This food will not rot, it will last, and it will satisfy the person for all time. Of course, this is spiritual food, not meat and potatoes.

Jesus told the crowd to **work for this food that lasts.** Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, **'The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.'** -- John 6:26-29 Jesus clearly defined doing God's work as believing in Him. Sometimes faith is easy, but sometimes it is hard to believe in a good God. Our Karen immigrants know what it is to flee from a hostile army and live for over a decade confined to a refugee Camp in a foreign country. Htatson, now has the rest of his family here; his Dad Maung Daw, his Sisters Eh Hser and K'Bru and a brother Pah Dee. His Mother and older brother were drowned in a flash flood in the refugee Camp in 2002. Along with them his grandparents and 2 cousins were killed. Over 30 people from the refugee camp died that day. It takes real strength of faith sometimes to still believe in a good God. **To believe is our chief work.**

Jesus understood belief would not be easy. He was preparing himself to face the Cross. His body was to be given for us. We need to get this right. While he died on the Cross not a bone of his body needed to be broken, the stab wound showed he was already dead. At the last supper Jesus broke the bread as a sign that we as his church, his body in the world must be willing to sacrifice ourselves to be his witness'. We each must eat individually eat individually, each need to believe, and each of us live with personal faith. Just as bread is made from the grinding of many kernels, together each believer is part of the church that has the privilege of bearing his likeness in the world today.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life." - John 6:35

He was the spiritual Bread of Life. Not physical life, but spiritual life. Let's think about it. Jesus created physical bread when he fed the 5,000 - He had met the needs of their physical hunger (what their stomach wanted). Now, He wanted to meet their spiritual needs (what their soul needed). They had to figure out that He was where eternal life came from. This eternal life was so important because sin brought spiritual death. Everyone is dead in sin (see Ephesians 2:1-3 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath*). So, everyone needs to eat the Bread of Life.

"He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." - John 6:35

Jesus threw down this **fantastic promise** to meet their spiritual needs for all time: they would never hunger and they would never thirst if they came to Him. Of course, it carried some strings - they had to come to Him and believe in Him. They had to turn on their minds, their will, and their hearts - they had to commit themselves to Him. Faith is something you keep doing, not something that just happens. Our faith in Him says that, "I believe you are who you say you are, and I trust you to feed and water me for eternity". **Jesus' claim and promise is something you can't find anywhere else.** This is why for some people, choosing Jesus as the Bread of Life is a difficult decision. There are all kinds of phony breads. People might think their "bread" is their work, their marriage, what others think of them, etc. In the end, all of those things spoil. **Only Jesus gives that bread that satisfies the deepest needs that we have. So which bread are you eating today?** Is it something you found in the refrigerator that you got at the market down the street? Or **is it the real thing, Jesus?**