Jesus – The Bread of Life

1. Introduction

a. Last week we considered the people's response to the miracle of feeding the five thousand. Today, as we celebrate harvest, we are going to focus on the bread!!! If there's one thing I love more than any other its fresh bread. Having owned a bakery for many years I had the luxury of picking up a fresh loaf out of the oven, spreading it with butter and luxuriating in the treat of a comforting slice of good quality bread.

b. No matter where you are in the world, every culture has some form of bread. Whether it be a loaf, a pitta, a naan or a tortilla, bread is the staple diet for all cultures. Maybe God provided us with bread so that when Jesus Christ came into the world, he would be able to use the enjoyment of bread and the nourishment of bread as an illustration of what it means to believe on him and be satisfied with him. Bread exists to help us know what it is like to be satisfied in Jesus.

c. This is probably also true for water (John 4:14) and light (John 1:9; 14:6) and every other good thing that God has made. Nothing exists for itself. "All things were created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16). Every honourable pleasure that we have in the created world is designed by God to give us a faint taste of heaven and make us hunger for Christ. Every partial satisfaction in this life points to the perfect satisfaction in Jesus who made the world.

d. The pleasures of warm bread should send our senses and our spirits to Christ as the bread of life. The pleasures of cold water when we're hot and thirsty should send our senses and our spirits to Christ as the living water. The pleasures of light making all other natural beauties visible should send our senses and our spirits to Christ as the true light of the world.

e. So in John 6, we watch Jesus work a miracle with natural, created bread — the kind they ate every day. That's verses 1–15. Then in the rest of this long chapter, verses 16–71, Jesus shows people, with increasingly provocative and even offensive language, that this miracle of bread is about himself as the bread of God that comes down from heaven.

f. As we saw last week, the beginning and the end of the feeding of the five thousand shows us both that Jesus is doing more than feeding people with natural bread, and that the people, in general, are in no spiritual condition to see what he is doing. As we have seen a couple of times, Jesus says something or does something in the natural realm as a way of pointing to the spiritual realm, and the people don't get it.

2. The Bread of life

John 6:25-35 *[25] When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" [26] Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. [27] Do not labour 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." [28] Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" [29] Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." [30] So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? [31] Our fathers ate the*

*manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" **32** 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. **33** For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." **34** They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."*

***35** 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.*

a. Here we pick up where we left off last week. The crowd have come to Jesus wanting more signs to satisfy their desires. Jesus makes it very clear that what they desire will perish, it will not satisfy. What he is offering is life that will endure for ever.

b. By equating Himself with bread, Jesus is saying he is *essential* for life. The life Jesus is referring to is not physical life, but eternal life. Jesus is trying to get the Jews' thinking off of the physical realm and into the spiritual realm. He is contrasting what He brings as their Messiah with the bread He miraculously created the day before. That was physical bread that perishes. He is spiritual bread that brings eternal life.

c. Importantly, Jesus is making another claim to deity. This statement is the first of the "I AM" statements in John's Gospel. The phrase "I AM" is the covenant name of God (Yahweh, or YHWH), revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). The phrase speaks of self-sufficient existence (or what theologians refer to as "aseity"), which is an attribute only God possesses. It is also a phrase the Jews who were listening would have automatically understood as a claim to deity.

d. Also, notice the words "come" and "believe." This is an invitation for those listening to place their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. This invitation to come is found throughout John's Gospel. Coming to Jesus involves making a choice to forsake the world and follow Him. Believing in Jesus means placing our faith in Him that He is who He says He is, that He will do what He says He will do, and that He is the only one who can.

e. Jesus also uses the words "hunger and thirst." Again, it must be noted that Jesus isn't talking about alleviating physical hunger and thirst. The key is found in another statement Jesus made, back in his Sermon on the Mount.

***Matthew 5:6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

f. When Jesus says those who come to Him will never hunger and those who believe in Him will never thirst, He is saying He will satisfy our hunger and thirst to be made righteous in the sight of God.

g. If there is anything the history of human religion tells us, it is that people seek to earn their way to heaven. This is such a basic human desire because God created us with eternity in mind. The Bible says God has placed the desire for eternity in our hearts.

***Ecclesiastes 3:11** ….. he has put eternity into man's heart*

h. The Bible also tells us that there is nothing we can do to earn our way to heaven because we've all sinned and the only thing our sin earns us is death.

Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

i. There is no one who is righteous in himself (Rom.3:10). Our dilemma is we have a desire we cannot fulfil, no matter what we do. That is where Jesus comes in. He, and He alone, can fulfil that desire in our hearts for righteousness through thedivine transaction

2 Cor. 5:21 *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

j. When Christ died on the cross, He took the sins of mankind upon Himself and made atonement for them. When we place our faith in Him, our sins are imputed to Jesus, and His righteousness is imputed to us. Jesus satisfies our hunger and thirst for righteousness. He is our Bread of Life. The only way to satisfy the longing in our soul for eternity and purpose is to feed on the Bread of Life

3. Eternal life not an easy life

a. Jesus did not come into the world mainly to give bread, but to be bread, the all-satisfying bread for our souls. He does care about our physical lives in this age, but he cares 10 million times more about our eternal lives. The day of resurrection is coming when he will give us bodies like his glorious body, and when *"he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away"* (Rev. 21:4).

b. Jesus did not come into the world mainly to deliver us from the sufferings of this present age, but to deliver us from the wrath to come.

1 Thess.1:10 *… and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

John 6:27-29 ***27*** *Do not labour 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."* ***28*** *Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"* ***29*** *Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

c. What does he mean that we should labour for the food that endures to eternal life? What does he mean that we should not work for the bread that perishes? These questions are important as we reflect on our daily life. What are we doing so that we have eternal life? How are we going about our daily life so that it won't be said of us that we laboured for the food that perishes?

4. The Food That Endures

a. Jesus tells them they should labour for eternal life to which the people respond '*What must we do, to be doing the works of God?*'" How? What are those works? How do you work for the bread that gives eternal life?"

b. Jesus answers in verse 29, "*This is the work of God*" meaning this is the kind of work you do to please God and get the bread that gives life, "*that you believe in him whom he has sent*." Believing is taking Jesus as the all-satisfying, life-giving treasure that he

is. It means believing in Jesus as the bread that God has sent from heaven for the life of the world.

c. The people are standing in front of the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ — the infinitely valuable, infinitely beautiful, all-satisfying, everlasting food who gives righteousness unto eternal life and they ask: What kind of works does God want us to do so that we can have the Bread of Life?

d. Jesus' response is, basically, if you don't see the person standing in front of you for who he is, no amount of work is going to make him your treasure. You don't need to do any works, you need to taste and see. To eat and believe.

John 1:12 *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*

e. Believing is receiving and seeing Jesus for the food that he is, and eating. That is, taking him into our soul, our life, and receiving him as the all-satisfying, life-giving treasure that he is.

f. So Jesus takes the idea of working for this bread and turns it upside down. If a feast is spread before you, and you don't see it as a feast, no amount of working for God will turn it into a feast. You need to see it and freely eat and live. Or you die. Jesus is that feast. Those who eat — that is, believe — live forever. Those who don't, perish.

5. The Food That Perishes

a. Finally, what does the first clause of verse 27 mean? "Do not labour for the food that perishes." In verse 26, Jesus said that these people were expending significant energy tracking him down, first on one side of the Sea of Galilee and then on the other. And why? Because they had eaten their fill. The product of his miracle, not the person, had satisfied them. "You are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

b. That's the backdrop for saying now in verse 27: "Do not labour for the food that perishes." That's what they were doing. But I think Jesus is generalising here for us as well as for them. He is speaking to us: Don't labour for ordinary human food.

c. We know he doesn't mean quit your jobs and stop working. We know that because the whole New Testament assumes and commends the dignity of work.

Eph. 4:28 *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*

d. When he says, "Do not labour for the food that perishes," he does not mean that we shouldn't earn a living and use it to buy bread that perishes so that we and our families can eat it and keep on working.

2 Thess.3:10 *For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.*

e. The normal way to eat the bread that perishes is to work for it. So, "do not labour for the bread that perishes" does not mean don't make money and use it to put food on the table. What Jesus is saying is that once we have tasted the "food that endures to eternal life" <u>our focus</u> is far more on eternity and the joy of knowing and believing. Our day to day work exists within the context of our eternal destiny and our joy in

our relationship with God. The Bread of Life becomes the thing we treasure in our hearts.

Matt.6:21 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

f. The food that perishes no longer dominates our mind. Christ dominates our mind as the supreme treasure. And if things look bleak, we remember we are going to live forever and this is but a fleeting moment in the context of all eternity.

6. Setting our minds on things above

Col.1:1-3 *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

a. So we live our lives not dominated by the desire for the bread that perishes of for the fear of losing it. We work through each day knowing him, trusting him, treasuring him, being satisfied in him, with our heart set on making much of him in every aspect of our day.

b. Keeping eternal life before us, and snacking all day on the Bread of Life, will bring zeal and excellence and joy to our work because we know him, we trust him, we treasure him, we aim to make much of him. It means that everything we do in his name and for his glory will be rewarded forever and ever in the age to come.

c. Our lives are not driven by the need for wordly security or acceptance by others. We are not striving for an easy life where we are satisfied by the things of this world. He is our feast when everything else fails and he is our satisfaction.

d. Much of the world strives to achieve that ultimate place of a happy, comfortable retirement but when they get there it still does not truly satisfy. Or they strive for the perfect relationship where they can find acceptance and comfort, but still it will not truly satisfy. There is only one who will satisfy, only one who promises an eternal future of satisfaction, joy and comfort. Jesus declares "I AM the bead of life"

7. Feed on Him

John 6:51-54 *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." **52** The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" **53** So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

a. Jesus, here, is referring to giving his flesh as a sacrifice for the world. He is talking about his flesh and blood being given as a substitution for the world. In other words, he is pointing forward to the cross.

b. When Jesus talks about eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Jesus, he means trust him as one who dies for you. Receive him as one who gives his life for you. Treasure him as one who bears God's wrath for you (John 3:26). Feed on all that God is for you in him because of his suffering flesh and shed blood.

c. Eternal life is possible for sinners like us, not only because we receive Jesus, but because the Jesus we receive suffered in his flesh and shed his blood so that our sins

could be blotted out because Jesus took our place. We receive him as our perfect substitution — as our punishment and as our righteousness. That's the great offer of this chapter. Receive Jesus as the all-satisfying bread from heaven who gives life to the world because he would die in our place and rise again.

d. Jesus offers himself to us freely as the food that endures to eternal life and no amount of working for God can make you see him as a feast. He is free. He did the work on the cross. All we can do is eat, that is, believe, and live. And when we eat, two things change - a new chapter is added to our lives, eternity. And a new treasure dominates our heart, Jesus. And that changes everything.

8. Conclusion

John 6:60-66 *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" [61] But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offence at this? [62] Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? [63] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life…… [65] And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." [66] After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*

a. As glorious as this truth is, it is also offensive. The idea of feeding on Jesus and looking for our satisfaction in him and our eternal destiny means many people turn away from Jesus. His words demand too much from the person who has their focus on this life and its fleeting satisfactions.

b. Our choice is will we feed on him, lay down our desires, our agendas and allow Jesus to be our full satisfaction. When this world buffets and batters us, when this world does not bring the comfort and success it promises, will we feed on his body, fix our eyes on eternity and allow his words to be our food.

Col.1:1-3 *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*