

## John 6:25-35

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, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” 28 Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform 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, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” 32 Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which 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 will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

## DAILY BREAD

What’s for dinner? Every night we ask that question. Now, it’s not like I worry about where my next meal is coming from.

Eating for me, and I suspect for many of you is a kind of entertainment. The evening meal is a time to reconnect with family and friends.

And, as we all know, if you feed them, they will come.

But, in Jesus’ day just getting enough daily bread was a struggle for most people. The what’s for dinner question was a question of survival.

It was a matter of life and death.

And so when God miraculously provided food and water for His people, it was a powerful sign.

It was a way of teaching the people to trust God. It was a sign that God's kingdom was coming. It was a sign of hope for life eternal.

This was not any bread that the people received. It was the bread of life.

## WANTING MORE

The context for our lesson is the feeding of the 5,000. In all four gospels we read some version of this story. The basic facts are the same in all four stories. Jesus fed 5,000 hungry people in the wilderness with only 5 loaves and two fish. It was a miracle that convinced many people that Jesus was someone special, perhaps a powerful prophet like the days of old.

But in John's gospel we learn that for the crowds, one miracle wasn't enough. They wanted more miracles. Jesus had given them dinner. Now they wanted breakfast!

When the crowds came back the next morning, neither Jesus nor his disciples were anywhere to be found. The people learned that during the night Jesus and his disciples had crossed over to the other side of the sea.

The hungry crowd would not be denied. So, they got into their boats and followed Jesus to the other side. And on the other side of the sea they found Jesus. But, they didn't get the breakfast they wanted. Instead, Jesus said,

"I know why you followed me. You want more food. But, you need more than just another meal. You need God. God has placed his seal of approval on the Son of Man. Turn to him. He can give you what you really need. He can give you the food that endures to eternal life, the bread of heaven."

## A SERMON INSTEAD OF FOOD

Instead of food Jesus gave the people a sermon. Now I know from personal experience that people value food over a sermon. Let the sermon go too long and keep us from beating the Baptists to the restaurants, and I am in big trouble.

The crowds resisted what Jesus had to say. They didn't want a sermon. They wanted another miracle, preferably one that included breakfast! Yes,

they said that they wanted to do what God wanted them to do. But, when Jesus said that they needed to believe in Him, the people replied,

“We’ll believe. But, we need a little help with that. What have you done for us lately? Help us believe by giving us another sign.

Take Moses for example. Now that Moses was a great leader, and do you know why he was great Jesus? He knew how to feed his people. He gave them manna in the wilderness. He gave them bread from heaven. If you are who you say you are, then breakfast is the least that you can do!”

### SEEKING FAST FOOD

I think many of us are like this crowd. We say that we want to do God’s will. But, instead of seeking the kingdom of God, we seek all sorts of other things. Instead of seeking the “true bread from heaven” we seek fast food.

Fast food describes more than an unhealthy way of eating. It describes a culture that worships instant gratification.

And this fast food culture often invades the church. Instead of seeking God’s will, we seek the desires of our heart.

Notice that the people made a subtle change to Scripture. They said that Moses gave the people food in the wilderness. Why did they make that change?

They wanted to control Jesus. They wanted Jesus to give them what they want.

I’ve noticed that we do the same thing. We focus on some Scriptures that promise us stuff, and we tend to ignore those Scriptures that challenge us.

This is especially true of those Scriptures that speak of justice, compassion and peacemaking. We would rather not hear about such things.

Just give us the bread Jesus.

Fight our battles for us. Help us make money.

Build a hedge around our life so that nothing will ever hurt us.

## NO MORE IDOLS

But, Jesus doesn't want us to have a fast food faith, a faith that gives us what we want now but leaves us wanting in the future. Jesus wants to give us bread from heaven.

Indeed, Jesus is that bread. In him our sins are forgiven. In him we have hope for eternal life. Even the best things in life cannot compare with eternity.

Unfortunately, many of us do not worry about eternity. Instead, we succumb to idolatry. We substitute earthly obsessions for matters of real importance. Instead of seeking the kingdom that comes, we compromise with the kingdom that is already here.

Idolatry is a tricky sin because we take something that is good and make it into something bad. For example, the feeding of the 5,000 was good. It was a powerful sign of God's coming kingdom.

But, the people tried to bring that heavenly sign down to earth. When they saw what Jesus could do, they didn't say, "Let's listen to what Jesus has to say." No, in John 6:15 we learn that the people were planning to take Jesus by force and make him their king.

Jesus was able to give the people bread so why not make him king? Make Jesus into a political leader who agrees with our views and gives us what we want.

But, Jesus would have none of it. The Bible tells us that Jesus would not allow his kingdom to be hijacked by the politics of the mob. He withdrew from the crowd and went by himself to the mountain.

Follow the example of Jesus. Do not let your faith be hijacked by others. Do not substitute politics or power or money or bread for the will of God. Take time to withdraw from the crowd and consider what is really important.

Go to the mountain. Seek to a higher view.

Be warned. Everything labeled Christian does not come from Christ. There are still many in the world that would give us what we want instead of what we really need. This is the way those in power try to control us.

But, Jesus loves enough to tell us the truth. Jesus is the true bread that comes down from heaven. Jesus is the true revelation of God.

## I AM

If you want to know God and if you want to know what it means to be really human look to Jesus. Jesus satisfies our deepest longing. Whoever comes to him will never be hungry. Whoever believes in him will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)

The gospel of John is filled with important statements in which Jesus says; “I am ...”

Jesus, says, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” He says, “I am the Good Shepherd.” And in our passage for today he says, “I am the true bread from heaven.”

These “I am” sayings all point to a common theme. Jesus is claiming to be Divine. He is claiming to be one with the Father, the Word made flesh. Remember when Moses met the presence of God in the burning bush? He asked God’s name and the cryptic reply was, “I am who I am.”

Jesus’ “I am” statements hearken back to that important moment.

Jesus was claiming to be that life giving force that is behind all the things that sustain us. As God sustained the Israelites with manna in the wilderness so Jesus sustains the church. But, unlike regular bread that satisfies us for only a short time, Jesus satisfies the deepest longings of our soul.

These were bold claims that Jesus was making, and many did not accept what Jesus was saying. The people began to “murmur” against Jesus much as the Israelites, when they were without food in the wilderness murmured against Moses.

These folks who had personally experienced the miraculous feeding the night before now say the next morning, “What does he mean saying I am the

bread of life? This is Joseph's son. We know his family. How can he claim to be divine? How could God work in such a common way through people that we know so well?"

What about you? Do you believe that God could come in Jesus? Do you believe the face of the Divine can be revealed in a human face? Do you think the bread of heaven can come down to earth?

### A HARD LESSON TO LEARN

When I look back on my life I can clearly see God's blessings and care. Again and again God has given me exactly what I needed when I needed it.

And yet, as I look toward the future, I often forget the blessings of the past. Instead of remembering the way God has fed me with daily bread, I complain about what I don't have today and worry about what might happen tomorrow.

In other words, I murmur. And my murmuring belies a lack of faith in the goodness of God. I do not trust the good news to be truly good. I let fear and skepticism overwhelm me.

I'm not alone. Everyone here has the same problem. Faith for all of us is a constant struggle. Each day is a test of what we really believe. That's especially true when the going gets rough.

### THE SIGN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

And that's why Jesus left his disciples a reminder, a tangible means of remembering what is really important.

We eat the Lord's Supper as a way of getting in touch with God's grace. It gives us a way to touch body broken and blood shed for us. It is a tangible way to experience the forgiveness and salvation of God.

The Lord's Supper is a sign of the heavenly banquet when God's people from all times and places will gather to praise God's holy name and receive God's gracious care. This sure and certain hope for the future "feeds" us today. This vision of grace transforms us and enables us to feel satisfied.

I like that line from our first hymn, “God of Grace and God of Glory.”  
 “Bread of heaven, bread of heaven feed us till we want no more. Feed us till we want no more.”

Did you watch the opening ceremony for the Summer Olympics? As part of the show children’s choirs from all over the United Kingdom sang.

The kids from Wales sang this hymn. I loved it. Amid all the hoopla and the glory of the kingdoms of the world, these children reminded us what was really important, the Bread of Heaven that feeds us till we want no more.”

### TASTE AND SEE

The Psalmist wrote, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” (Psalm 34:8)  
 True faith is a combination of knowledge and experience. You have to take God at His Word and trust in God’s promises. When we put faith into action, then we begin to understand that the Lord is good.

Do you like to try new foods? There’s a new phenomena in our area, the food truck festival. We had one of those in Kissimmee this past Friday. Each truck has ethnic foods that you might not ordinarily try. But, when the food trucks come to town you can sample a little bit of this and a little bit of that. And sometimes you find a new favorite food.

But, that will only happen if you “taste and see.” You have to risk trying something new. And through this gastronomic adventure, you develop a new hunger. You crave something that you didn’t even know about before.

The same is true when it comes to faith. Faith is by its very nature an adventure. Faith is a longing for what God is doing in the world and in our lives. We don’t just want to know about God. We want to know God. We hunger and thirst for God.

Another line from the Psalmist comes to mind, “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you O God.”

### TRULY HUNGRY

Dr. Martin Arias, a bishop in the UMC told of something that happened while the Lord’s Supper was being served in Bolivia. They were celebrating

communion in a big tent in Santa Cruz. And the bishop saw a barefoot boy, about eleven years old, approaching to receive the elements.

When the plate filled with tiny pieces of bread passed before him, instead of taking one piece, he grasped a handful of crumbs and started eating them eagerly. This was more than symbolic bread for this boy. He was really hungry.

This story reminds me of something that the Presbyterian minister and author, Frederick Buechner once wrote, “Man does not live by bread alone. But, he doesn’t live very long without it either.”

Certainly part of what it means to desire the bread of heaven is to have compassion on those who are in need of daily bread.

I remember a church leader from Central America speaking to our Presbytery. She said that some liberal theologians came to her country and suggested that the feeding of the 5,000 might not have been a miracle at all.

Instead when Jesus blessed the five loaves and two fish the richer people in the crowd were inspired to share what they had with those who were no so fortunate.

The people of her country who were very poor said with wide-eyed awe, “Wow, the rich shared with the poor. That really was a miracle.”

You see the greater miracle is not receiving daily bread. The greater miracle is a heart transformed by the grace of God as revealed in Jesus.

But, if only we had eyes to see, perhaps we might discover that we have more in common with the poor than we might think. We too are starving, not physically but spiritually. We too are in desperate need of the bread that only Christ can provide.

And so we come once again to be fed. We come once again to dream of that great day when all of us will sit at God’s table and eat a heavenly banquet with brothers and sisters from the East and West, North and South.

Brothers and sisters, come to the table. Taste and see that the Lord is good.