



John 6:25-35
I Am
The Bread of Life

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This morning we begin a new series looking at some statements that Jesus made about himself. All of these begin with “I am...” and then end with a metaphor that gives us some understanding about who Jesus is. For those of us who have known Jesus in our lives for a few years or more, we probably are familiar with the metaphors that Jesus uses and have grown accustomed to them. **However, if you’ve never heard these statements of Jesus’ before, they can sound a little alarming.** In fact, you might wonder if Jesus is either completely arrogant and boastful, or completely off his rocker. For example, imagine if someone stood up in some kind of a gathering of people – at crowded beach on a hot summer day, or at a company picnic, or at a conference – and proclaimed to the people there: “I am the way the truth and the life” ...or “I am the gate; those who come through me will be saved” ...or “I am the light of the world...if you follow me you will have the light that leads to life” ...if someone made these kinds of self-proclamations we’d all write them off as a bit loony.

And yet Jesus says these things and we proclaim them as true, and as evidence that he really was the Messiah and God come to us in the flesh. In fact, there are lots of people who aren’t followers of Jesus, who know he made these statements, but who still respect Jesus and think of him as a good teacher of ethics and morals. So, why can Jesus get away with saying these kinds things, but we can’t? I think it’s critical for us to understand these statements, why Jesus said them, what he’s really saying about who he is, and what it means to follow Him. And that’s what we’re going to do for 7 weeks, starting today.

So, all of these “I am” statements are in the gospel according to John, and today we’re looking at the statement Jesus made that he is “the bread of life.” Now, like everything Jesus said or you or I would say, there's a context around this statement. It's not like Jesus just sat in a vending machine dispensing wise sayings or miracles every time someone walked put, their money in, and pushed a button. Everything he said and did is part of his interaction and relationship with people. And along with the rest of them, this

statement about being the bread of life is no different.

And the context here is that Jesus had just fed the crowds of people with the five loaves of bread and two fish that a little boy had as his lunch.

Jesus was teaching a crowd of people, and the crowd keeps growing bigger as he teaches and as he performs miracles and heals people...and one of the disciples asks Jesus how they're going to feed all these people, because the nearest food court is a couple miles away. Plus, even if McD's or Taco Bell were nearby, Philip claims it would take 8 months wages to feed them all. So there's a boy there who has a little bit of bread and some fish, and offers it to Jesus as a possible solution. Jesus takes the bread and fish, gives a little prayer of thanks for the food, and they distributed it among the people...and there was more than enough. Everyone had their fill. And many of the people there recognized that it was a pretty good miracle they'd just witnessed. If they were to rank Jesus' miracles, they'd probably put this one up a ways on the list.

Then evening comes, and the Disciples get into a boat to go to the other side of the lake, or sometimes it's called the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is a little slow to get going and so he misses the boat. **Did you ever feel like you missed the boat on something...like an opportunity passed you by?** Well, you're in good company, because Jesus *literally* missed the boat. So if that's you, consider it a spiritual experience that helps you to be more Christ-like. Then, later in the evening he walks out on the lake and joins the disciples in the boat for the rest of the trip. Now, if *walking on water also* describes you, then you're *really* Christ-like. And if it *does* describe you, then please come talk to me after the service about a ministry event I'd like to plan out on Lake Washington. Anyway...the next day the crowds of people followed in their own boats, and made their way across the lake.

And that's where this morning's passage picks things up: the day after this miracle feast where the bread and fish got multiplied. And they immediately ask him: **'Rabbi, when did you come here?'** (John 6:25). They ask the question about Jesus' arrival on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, because they had seen the twelve Disciples leave without him. And you don't just row or sail across the lake on your own – especially the night before, because the

wind was blowing and the seas were rough. So this isn't something that the people would have expected Jesus to do on his own.

Jesus is able to perceive why the crowd has followed him across the lake, and it has nothing to do with the miracles he performed or the faith that might come from those signs. He says in verse 26 that they followed him because “you ate the loaves and had your fill.” To them, Jesus is simply a means to an end, and right now the desired end is to get some more free food. *They have a consumer mentality toward Jesus.*

The problem with that mentality is that when something doesn't go exactly as they want it to, they complain or leave, which is exactly what ends up happening a few verses later. The people start grumbling against Jesus when he won't give in to their desires, and then by the time you get to the end of chapter 6 it says that many of his disciples turned away from Jesus. The teaching he gave about him being the bread of life wasn't what they expected or wanted. He didn't feed them what they wanted to consume, even though what he was giving them what they needed. But they're simply consumers, and if a consumer can't get what he or she wants, then they'll shop somewhere else. So they bailed.

Even though some of them can't get out of this mentality, Jesus seeks to counteract it when he turns the conversation to a more spiritual one, and talks about seeking to have food that endures for eternal life, which, he says “the Son of Man will give.” You see: Jesus knows what we need. We *think* we know what we need, and sometimes we may be right, but we must always be careful and check it against what Jesus says. And here, we see that Jesus won't be deterred in offering what is *needed*, even if it's not what they *wanted*.

And so Jesus says to them: **“I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you [meaning, their ancestors] bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”**

Jesus reminds them that it wasn't Moses who provided the bread from heaven for the Israelites when they were wandering around in the desert, but rather it

was and is God the Father who provides bread that gives life.

Jesus is continuing to steer them into a deeper understanding of what they really need, which is something that gives and sustains life. Something that lasts, that's foundational. But they're stuck on food for their tummies – which we do need, but it doesn't last. In fact, their response is: **“Sir, always give us this bread” (John 6:34). Most translations are something more like, “Give us this bread always” or “all the time.”** In other words, they want this bread on an on-going basis. They're like, “Sweet! Let's see if we can get free food for life.”

This is not the last time people have tried to get free food for life. A couple years ago, there was a burger restaurant in Australia that offered free burgers for life. This is a true story. They offered free burgers for life to their customers. All you had to do was submit an essay, no longer than 25 words (not much of an essay!), about why you should be one of the winners. They would then select 10 people to receive free burgers for life. The catch is that the winners had to then get a life-sized tattoo of one of their burgers along with the restaurant's slogan, “burgerlove.” The tattoo had to be in a place that an employee could see it if they asked you. So – not on your right cheek hidden under your underwear. They had over 3500 people submit an essay to be selected! More than 3500 people were willing to get a tattoo of a burger, **(Photo)** just so they could eat free burgers for life.



That's kind of where these people are that Jesus is talking to. “Sir, give us this bread always.” They want free bread for life, from Jesus, though I'm not sure they'd be willing to get a tattoo for it. He's trying to steer them onto spiritual matters, but they're just thinking with their tummies. Finally, 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” (John 6:35).**

For them, bread was a basic ingredient to life. Bread, poultry, and fish were the common elements for meals. In our culture, bread is fairly common, but

less than for them. In other parts of the world, other foods would be considered more basic and elemental.

For instance, when Gwen and I lived in Seoul, South Korea for half a year, we did not get nearly as much bread there as we do here in the USA. Much more basic and elemental to them is rice. If Jesus were to make this statement today in Korea, he might say that he is the “rice of life.” Or maybe the Kimchi of life...but I don’t like Kimchi, so I’m thinking Jesus would say “the rice of life.” Today, in American culture, he might say “I am the High Fructose Corn Syrup of life” because that stuff is in everything. But in his day and culture it was “bread of life.” **The point is, he is a basic and necessary ingredient to spiritual fulfillment.** As basic and necessary as bread is to their physical diet, Jesus is to their spiritual diet. And Jesus continues to offer the same thing. He offers himself still today to whoever will come. He is a basic ingredient to spiritual satisfaction. We can't find real and lasting peace, love, joy, or abundant life without him. That's what Jesus is saying when he says, “I am the bread of life.”

The question for us to ask, then, is this: **How are we doing in our own spiritual nourishment?** What “food” are we feeding our souls? What are our sources for satisfying our spiritual cravings?

For many people today, we are often no different than the crowds in Jesus' day, when it comes to answering these kinds of questions. We try to satisfy spiritual cravings with things that do have spiritual power, but their power, in the end, is only the power to “kill, steal and destroy.” Not that they advertise that up front, of course. But that’s the end result. So we try and fill up on money, or pornography, or power, or popularity, or social media, or something else. We might not think there’s a spiritual connection to them, but there is. They can impact us at a really deep level. In these kinds of things, at a basic foundational level that we may not always even be consciously aware of, we’re seeking love, acceptance, personal value, personal confidence, relationship, security, and more. These are all aspects of life that have deep spiritual roots. And: **When we try and get filled up on something other than what Jesus offers, we end up still hungry.** We’re still empty. Not right away, necessarily. There’s a high and a fulfillment that comes from getting

filled up on the fake bread that the world offers. But in the end they always leave us craving more.

For instance, in March of 2011 the Wall Street Journal and other news outlets reported on a study of 120 families with a net worth of \$25 million or more, that portrays the ultrarich as “lost souls burdened by the fears, worries and family distortions of too much money.” The article continued:

“According to an article in The Atlantic, ‘the respondents turn out to be a generally dissatisfied lot, whose money has contributed to deep anxieties involving love, work, and family. Indeed, they are frequently dissatisfied even with their sizable fortunes. Most of them still do not consider themselves financially secure; for that, they say, they would require on average one-quarter more wealth than they currently possess.’”¹

They were a “generally dissatisfied lot.” **Nothing of this world— not even a net worth of \$25 million or more – will satisfy the spiritual cravings that we have.** It will always leave you craving more. If you want to have true fulfillment in life, there's one way to be sure you'll get it: come to Jesus Christ and believe in him. He's the bread that our heavenly father has sent us. Twice, Jesus told the crowd that belief in him is what it takes. Remember early on, the crowd asked, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” And Jesus responded, “Believe in the one whom the heavenly father has sent.” And then when Jesus proclaimed to them “I am the bread of life,” he continued on saying, **“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” – Jesus (John 6:35).**

Notice: It's not that Jesus *gives* the spiritual bread that we so desperately need in our lives: He *is* the bread. Jesus Christ is what we're looking for in all of our cravings, and he feeds and sustains us through belief in him.

You and I and all people have a spiritual hunger, whether we recognize it or not. It's built into us. We're created in the image of God, and to be in relationship with him. We are spiritual beings with spiritual longings. The point Jesus makes here is that: **We can't fill that deep-seated longing with**

the stuff of this world. Jesus is the answer.

- You may have a house, but without Jesus it really isn't a home.
- You may have an education, but without Jesus you really don't have wisdom.
- You may know people, but without Jesus you really don't have true relationships.
- You may have relatives and a family, but without Jesus you really don't have love.
- You may have quiet moments in your life, but without Jesus you don't have peace for your soul.
- You may live a hundred years, but without Jesus you don't have eternity.
- You may have a lot of money, but without Jesus you don't really have security.
- You may have a refrigerator full of food, but without Jesus Christ you will die of starvation.

It's not that houses and education money and people and all these other things are bad. It's just that they don't fully satisfy. But Jesus, the bread of life, is foundational when it comes to being satisfied. Come to him, the bread of life. He will take care of it all, and you will never go hungry again. Let's pray...Amen.

ⁱ From the Wall Street Journal in March of 2011: <https://blogs.wsj.com/wealth/2011/03/09/dont-envy-the-super-rich-they-are-miserable/>