



ROSE
HILL
CHURCH

John 6:25-35
So That You May Believe: John
“The Bread of Life”

Rev. Brian North
June 19th, 2022

As we mentioned earlier, and you undoubtedly are aware, today is Father’s Day. And I don’t know about you, but there are two things I think of when I think of fathers. First, is that dads seem to have their own innate sense of humor. We’ve coined the phrase “dad joke” to refer to silly jokes that dads love to tell – jokes with an obvious punchline that is somehow endearingly funny. For instance, “Why do fathers take an extra pair of socks when they go golfing?” “In case they get a hole in one.” Or “What do you call a fish wearing a bowtie?” “Sofishticated.” But dad humor extends beyond corny jokes. It includes other kinds of humor as well, as shown in **this photo**. The sign says, “*You only live once. Lick the bowl.*” Great sign for the kitchen, not so great for the bathroom...and that’s why it’s so funny. Dad humor at its best. So that’s one thing I think of when I think of dads.



The second thing I think of is probably just a bit old-school, but it’s still true to a degree today still, and that is that: **Fathers are frequently the “bread-winners” for the family.** In today’s world where a lot of moms work outside the home as well (my mom did, my wife does), it’s more true to say that both moms and dads are frequently the bread-winners...but that doesn’t mean it’s not true about dads still, as well.

And when I think about that word bread-winner here on Father’s Day, and we read a passage like we have this morning, where Jesus says, “I am the bread of life” it makes me think about how I’m nourishing my kids spiritually. And this applies to other relationships as well – for moms, grandparents, or in other non-family relationships where we have some influence: **How are we helping these other people to know Jesus, the bread of life?** How is our life reflecting Jesus’ love, holy living, etc.?

Now, before we jump into this passage, let me just refresh our memory of what's happened the last two Sundays, because today's reading starts off very quickly and presumes you've just read what comes before it. So: Two weeks ago we read about Jesus feeding a huge crowd with a boy's lunch. It was a lunch which consisted of a couple fish and some what? Bread. So the "Bread" theme continues today, and with many of the same people who were there for that miraculous meal. Then last week we saw how after everyone eats, and with darkness approaching, the people head home, but: The Disciples headed across Lake Galilee, and Jesus stays behind. Then Jesus catches up to them out on the water in the middle of the night. The next day the crowds of people follow in their own boats, and make their way across the lake. And that's where today's passage begins. So, let's turn to **John 6:25-35**.

So, a crowd of people show up, and they immediately ask him: **'Rabbi, when did you come here?'** (**John 6:25**). They ask this, 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.

And 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 loved the event, and they loved how Jesus served them, but they aren't *really* interested in what Jesus has to offer. So, Jesus gives a brief teaching to try and get them thinking more spiritually, to be thinking more eternally when he talks about not seeking food that spoils but food that endures to eternal life. But they continue to be stuck on Jesus just giving them what they want. They're consumers. They want a show. They want to be served. They want their lunch (breakfast, now?) handed to them again.

The problem with that mentality toward Jesus 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 number of 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 (lower case “d” – not the 12 Disciples) turned away from Jesus. The teaching he gave about being the bread of life wasn't what they expected or wanted. And if a consumer can't get what he or she wants, then they'll shop somewhere else. Just this week I was at the Dollar store, and the line to pay for stuff was long. Seems like it always is. And there was a guy waiting, but not in line – just off to the side, hoping another employee would step up to another register, and he thought he'd be the first to get in line. He finally asked the clerk if they were going to open another checkout stand. After then waiting for 10-15 seconds with no clerk coming, he left his cart full of stuff and walked out the door. I guess he was in a hurry, and the store couldn't provide what he wanted: another clerk and a fast checkout process. That's how people operate when they have a consumer mentality.

In the passage, even though some of them can't get out of this consumer mentality, **Jesus seeks to counteract that mentality and he continues to turn the conversation to a more spiritual one.** He 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 Scripture, God's Word to us. And here, we see that Jesus won't be deterred in offering what they *need*, even if it's not what they *want*.

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” (John 6:32-33).** 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 God the Father who did that. And Jesus says that now he himself is the true bread from heaven which his heavenly father is providing.

Jesus is continuing to steer them into a deeper understanding of what they really need, which is something that gives and sustains life. But they're still

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).** In other words, they want this bread on an on-going basis for their stomachs. They continue to see Jesus as a vending machine. Insert coins, or dollar bills nowadays...even swipe your credit card...press button, and out comes what you want: A bag of chips, a soda pop, a candy bar, or whatever it is. That's their approach to Jesus and to spirituality: Just give me what I want. 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, as you may know, 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. When Gwen and I were first married, we lived in Seoul, South Korea for several months. While there, we traveled to several places in China, plus Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines...and in that part of the world, rice is a basic element of life. If Jesus had gone to that part of the world, he'd have said he was the rice of life; in other places he might have been the beans of life, or the corn of life. Here in America...I don't know...the French Fries of life? In our family it would be the chicken or barbecue sauce or salsa of life. The point is, **Jesus uses a common, every day food to illustrate that he's a basic, foundational piece to life and life eternal.** You want eternal life? Then Jesus, the bread of life, is the starting place. Without him, it's like trying to have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich without the bread.

This metaphor of bread is very similar to the metaphor of water, and water that springs up to eternal life, that Jesus used with the woman at the well back in chapter 4, and sort of touched on again at the end of the last verse we read this morning, when Jesus says that whoever believes in him will never hunger nor thirst. Jesus then takes the metaphor and speaks about it quite extensively all the way through verse 59. In verse 48, he even repeats the statement, “I am the bread of life.” And throughout this whole conversation – the verses we read today and all the way up through verse 59 – Jesus is using

this metaphor of bread, and his body as bread from heaven, given by his heavenly Father, as a metaphor for himself. He is the bread from heaven.

In fact, in verse 49 he again references the manna that God provided for their ancestors while they wandered in the desert 1400 years earlier or so. It is a passage from Exodus 16 they were all very familiar with. And Jesus says, **“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51).** But the Jewish crowd he was speaking to did not get the metaphor and in verse 52 John tells us that they started arguing among themselves about “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

And, if you take it literally, it does sound strange – like a misplaced sign telling you to go ahead and lick the bowl. But the key to understanding this all comes fairly early on in this whole conversation – in verses 28 and 29 (reiterated in 35), when we read this: **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 6:28-29).** Their question shows their skewed perspective, because their question is based on the idea that they have to do certain works to please God. They assume that they have to work their way to pleasing God, to being right with God.

And Jesus’ answer is not what they expected, because there’s nothing for them to *do* in his answer. He says: “The work of God is this: Believe in the one he has sent.” That right there is the key to understanding the whole rest of the passage and to understanding the bread metaphor. To receive the bread from heaven that God now provides in the person of Jesus, we don’t actually eat Jesus, as they supposed. That *would* be weird, as they say later on.

Rather, eating is simply a continuation of the bread metaphor and it has to do with *believing* Jesus. Trusting Jesus. Receiving his death on the cross as the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices for sin; Believing that his resurrection is real and gives us the hope of eternal life. Trusting in *that* is what it means to eat the bread of life.

Now, it's not all passive receptivity on our part. In fact, when Jesus says to "believe" the word is *pisteuo*, and it's an active form of the verb. So, it's not a lazy belief, or a belief that doesn't result in doing something. **But what we "do" flows out of our belief in what Jesus has already done for us.**

So, "believing" Jesus is the key to eternal life. He's as foundational as bread in their culture, French fries (?) in ours, rice in most Asian cultures, and so forth. But though Jesus is a basic element to eternal life, he is sure and certain. Four times in verses 39-54 Jesus gives the assurance that those who come to faith will be kept by him. For instance, in verse 39, "I shall lose none of those he gives to me" and in verse 54, of those who believe in him, he says, "I will raise them up at the last day." Not that he "might" depending on how he's feeling that day or depending on if our faith is strong enough. Those who believe, he *will* raise up – you can bet your life on it. He won't lose a single one. He won't let them slip through his grasp.

Our feeble faith, as important as that faith is, is not ultimately what delivers us into eternity. Rather, it's Jesus and his absolute steadfastness. His trustworthiness. His faithfulness. *He* is our blessed assurance, not our faith. *He* is our firm foundation, not our faith. *He* is our solid rock, not our faith. *He* is our amazing grace, not our faith. *He's* got the whole world in his hands, not our faith. *He* is Mighty to save, not our faith. This is such good news! This is the grace of God! He has done what we can never do ourselves, and he's done it in Jesus Christ, the bread of life. Let's believe that with an active belief, living it out, knowing that Jesus has flung wide the heavenly gates.

And then, just to tie this back to what we started with on this Father's Day: because it's an active faith, let's make sure – whether we're a bread-winner in our home or not – **Let's make sure that we share the bread of life with others.** We can do this in our home, in our communities, in our places of work. We can befriend and develop relationships with people in a variety of places of life. Some are easier or more obvious than others. But for all of them, Jesus is the nourishment that they need as desperately as we do. And we can actively live out our faith – not because we have to earn God's pleasure...he's already pleased with us when we trust in his son – but

because our hearts are so full of gratitude for what God has done in Christ Jesus. Like one beggar helping another to find some food, we can lead others to the bread of life. Let's pray...Amen.