

# Life-giving Bread

John 6:22-30

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**Introduction:** Put yourselves in their places for a minute. They are farmers and shepherds. They live off the land and by the sweat of their own labor. In order for them to eat bread for example, they must plant wheat, the birds must not eat the seed before it is sprouted, the rains must come at the proper times to keep the wheat alive and growing, the locusts and other pests must not come before harvest and eat the plants, the heat of the sun must not be so intense that it scorches and kills the plant, the rains must stop at the right time so that they can harvest the wheat and thresh it and get it under cover before winter, the rats and vermin must not eat all the grain before they can grind it into flour and bake it into bread. Some of it cannot be eaten at all because it must be saved for next year's seed.

It takes 4 months from planting till harvest and then a couple of weeks to harvest, thresh, store and grind the wheat. Nearly five months of hard work and anxiety for a loaf of bread. Yes it is good, but if you could not buy it would you go through this? Well you probably would. Such cycles define the lives of agrarian people. We don't do it today because we have someone else to do it for us and we have means to purchase their product.

Bread is just bread to us. It is easy to get and still relatively inexpensive. But it does not take a lot of imagination to realize why bread was a big deal to the crowds that followed Jesus. They knew how hard it was to come by and now here is a man who can make it out of thin air and was willing to give it to them.

**Why am I preaching this sermon:** The event John records for us today took place the day after the feeding of the 5,000. During the night Jesus has been dealing with and teaching His own disciples. He wants them to understand the lesson of the loaves and fishes.

Yesterday evening Jesus had compelled His disciples to get in a boat and cross the sea while He dismissed the crowd and went away to pray. John picks up the story as the yesterday's crowd begins to realize what had happened the night before.

**John 6:22-40** <sup>22</sup> The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but *that* His disciples had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup> There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. <sup>25</sup> When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup> "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which

the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." <sup>28</sup> Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." <sup>30</sup> So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?" <sup>31</sup> "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. <sup>33</sup> "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. <sup>36</sup> "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. <sup>38</sup> "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Jesus reads this crowd the same way He reads your heart....like an open book. He knows your secret thoughts and what motivates your actions better than you do. In fact, the Scripture states out rightly that our own hearts deceive us. This is because we believe ourselves to be purer in motive than we actually are.

**Jeremiah 17:9-10** <sup>9</sup> The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? <sup>10</sup> "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."

**Hebrews 4:12-13** <sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Jesus knows you and He cares about you. He knows what needs you have and that you and I are driven primarily to fulfill our physical earthly needs. This account is not a condemnation of hungry people!! Jesus has already proven, the day before, that He does care about their and our physical needs.

Jesus has come into the world to bring the world back to God. Back to their life giver and life sustainer. To show men that there is a spiritual and eternal side to their lives that is always with us. All the desires of this life never satisfy us! The crowd was hungry again when they tracked Jesus down on the other side of the lake. That is a given with food but it is also an undeniable reality with all other things that men want and need in this world. None of the things we seek can fully satisfy us. Not human love, not sex, not financial security, not comfort or wealth in any measure. Life is an ongoing lesson of this certainty.

What Jesus is doing here and throughout much of John, is making this point to people who have not realized it or comprehended it. People just like you and me that have to work to meet our physical needs every day and then start over again the next day. Christ came to show us the source of our true life in God and not just the physical life that we received from our parents. To do that Jesus starts with the physical...the known and understood and then moves to the spiritual...the unknown and the mis-understood. Let's see how he does it with bread. We will pick up the narrative at the point where the crowd finally tracks Jesus down:

**John 6:25** <sup>25</sup> When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

"You almost got away from us!" "We don't understand how you got here so fast because we know you did not get into a boat." "Tell us when you got here so we can make sure you don't just disappear like that again." This is the scene and it is where Jesus begins to teach them about Eternal life. Every man seeks life, but men seek it from a fallen and dying world that can only give temporary sustenance. Jesus, as we have seen, cares deeply about our physical lives. He made our physical lives and the earth to sustain them, but this is not all there is! Men need God! They need their eternal life giver in order to have eternal life. No preacher has ever explained this better than Christ. Let's just look at what He says to all men and women...to us today.

**John 6:26-29** <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup> "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." <sup>28</sup> Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

**Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled:** In other words, "I know why you have gone to all the trouble to follow me to the other side of the lake when you were not even sure I would be here. You want the physical blessings I can give you!"

I have often heard preachers condemn the crowd for this, but Jesus does not really do that...does He? Was Jesus surprised to discover that the crowd was so "unspiritual" that they only followed Him to get another meal?" Of course not! Jesus was a man...a real man. He got hungry every day and had to find something to eat. Being human is not a sin. Having needs is not a sin in God or Christ's eyes. The fact that we need shelter, food, money and some degree of comfort and security is NOT A SIN in God's eyes. Jesus says this for their and our benefit. Jesus has love for men in their plight...

**Mark 6:34** <sup>34</sup> When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.

What He means to show you is that He knows what motivates us in this world. He knows why men follow Him. They want Him to give them something to satisfy them in this world. And Jesus does do that. He gives men, food, shelter, love and some measure of happiness....BUT what He says next is crucial for us all.

**Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life:** Jesus does not condemn us for having human needs. He is pointing out that fulfilling them will not fulfill our lives. The rich are not happy! The poor can be just as happy. The rich do not have fewer worries or greater satisfaction with their lives. In fact, it is often the opposite.

So is Jesus teaching that we should be poor like some believe? Absolutely not!! BUT...He is teaching that being rich in the things of this world will not make you RICH! Everything in this world is subject to destruction and lost and is fleeting.....right down to the ability of bread for your hunger.

**Which the Son of Man will give to you:** The crowd knows how much work it is to get a piece of bread to eat and they know that in just twelve short hours they are hungry again. Now they have to find bread and so they must find Jesus who is the bread giver.

But now, Jesus is offering something different. He has their attention. He is aware of their hunger. He is not condemning them for being physical, but He is going to use their physical need to reveal to them their spiritual need. And God still does this today. As long as you have no needs you will not seek God. If you believe that you can get everything you desire from the physical world you will not come to God for true enduring life.

Now here is the love of God in this. God wants you to be with Him in eternity. HE wants to satisfy the deepest longings of your heart and mind. He wants you to have pure, eternal and undiminished joy and comfort. He uses our dissatisfaction and lack of fulfillment with this world to cause us to ask Him for true life....eternal and joyful life.

Notice that Jesus says don't "labor" for what just perishes and then says that he will give what produces eternal life.

**On Him the Father, God, has set His seal:** Jesus is pointing out to the crowd that He has power over the physical world. He can make bread and fish. HE is the creator. HE is not just blowing smoke like other religious people. God has put His own seal of approval on Jesus through all these things and they should therefore believe Him when He says he can give them eternal life.

**Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?":** But this is not an easy lesson for humans. We are work oriented. The gospel of grace is not appreciated and that is why it is seldom preached in churches these days. It reveals to its hearers that God is the giver and they are the receivers. Even many who believe that Salvation is by faith and not by works actually believe the following. See if you are among them.

“If I will believe in God and if I will pray the sinners prayer, then God will give me eternal life in exchange for my belief and my prayer”

**Ephesians 2:8-9** <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

But is that what Paul taught the Ephesians? Not even close. What he taught them is that God initiates and brings to fruition our salvation. We are the receivers of it. The phrase, “by grace you have been saved through faith” does not mean that God will trade you grace for your faith. Paul has already taught this just 5 verses earlier.

**Ephesians 2:4-5** <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

It means that life is the gift and it is given to dead men who when they become alive understand it by faith. Faith is trusting God. Trusting what God says more than what you think is reasonable. God says He brings dead men to life apart from anything at all that they can do. The life and the faith are His gift to you this morning. SO humble yourselves to be grateful for your salvation and hope of heaven. It is 100% not your doing any more than any of the crowd had participated in the making of the bread and fish. The saints of the Old Testament knew this as well.

**Psalm 62:1-2** My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. <sup>2</sup> He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

**Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.":** Jesus has told them not to work for eternal life because it is a gift from Him alone. They have responded by asking, “what work then should we do?”

Jesus is a study in the kind of patience that every believer needs when they tell the gospel. He does not say...”what part of “gift” do you not understand. He continues to instruct them with the contrast between working and trusting someone else to work for you.

Works is the word we get “ergonomics” from. It speaks of actions...physical actions that humans do in order to get a particular result. We are wired this way. We get reward from our work. If we grow wheat we will eat bread. If we build a house we will get to live in it. And all this is true in the physical world. But we all die and leave this world and we live on in eternity.

The word “Believe” means trust. In English it has become to mean “believe a fact or a doctrine.” The same word used as a noun is translated “faith,” but both words mean trust. If you cross a bridge you trust that it will not give way. If you ride a cable car you trust that it will not fall. If you go into a mall you trust that it will not collapse. It is not blind faith is it? No! We have reasons why we trust. We are humanly made that way.....by God Himself who now asks us to trust Him on the basis of His works....His power over creation and His compassion and concerns for the lives of men and women.

Saving faith is entrusting your eternal life, your most precious possession to the Jesus Christ. Giving your life to Christ is not an exaggeration. It is the way a little child gives his or her life to their parent's care for them. They are confident that Mom and Dad can and will care for them, love them and protect them. Children do not work for their parents care they receive it as a gift....it is unearned.

**CONCLUSION:** So what is Jesus saying to us this morning? There is nothing you can do to obtain your own salvation! You do not have to do any works, pray any prayers, join any group or believe any particular doctrines....**TO BE SAVED!** That comes from trusting Christ alone to do everything on your behalf.

**1 Peter 2:24** He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

**1 John 2:2-3** He Himself is the propitiation [payment] for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world. <sup>3</sup> By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

I said that you do not need to do anything to be Saved because Christ does that on your behalf. If you prefer to trust yourselves, your own goodness, your own religion or morality then you can certainly do so, but God accepts only the work of Christ on your behalf. This is the Gospel's Core Message!

BUT....trust in Christ is not limited to salvation. If you trust Him for your eternal salvation they you will certainly trust Him for your present life. People will ask me if you are not religious and if you believe that there is nothing required of you to be saved why do you go to church, pray and devote your love to Christ's church? Okay fair enough! Because I trust Christ with my present life just as I do with my Eternal one. The Christian life is just a continuation of trust in God who said...

**Titus 2:1** But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

**Matthew 5:16** "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

What are you doing for God? Bible Reading? Devotions of some sort? Sporadic church attendance? Giving a few dollars? ....STOP IT! Listen to the Lord of Creation:

**John 6:29** <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

If Jesus can be trusted exclusively for eternity can't you trust Him also in this life?

**2 Timothy 2:15** <sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

**Galatians 6:9-10** <sup>9</sup> Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

**Hebrews 10:23-25** <sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; <sup>24</sup> and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

**Luke 6:38** Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

I want to worship Jesus this morning. Nothing does that like giving your life to Him. I want to love Jesus today and nothing does that like saying I trust you. I am a weak and fragile child, but I do trust you Lord...For my eternal life and to tell me what is best in this one as well. I want to be in fellowship with Jesus this morning...in communion with Him. He even went so far as to instruct us how to do so. But this is no ritual...it is no work. It is a worship! It is a memorial to remember His Works! His Love! His Righteousness!....on our behalf.

**Luke 22:14-20** <sup>14</sup> When the hour had come, He reclined *at the table*, and the apostles with Him. <sup>15</sup> And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup> for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup> And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; <sup>18</sup> for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> **And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."**

**SERVE THE BREAD:** His body, come down from heaven, given in your place!

**SERVE THE CUP:** **"He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."** His blood, poured out to confirm the New Covenant, no longer of works but fully dependent upon God Alone, accomplished by Christ Alone, received through Faith Alone and done for the Glory of God Alone!

**Jeremiah 31:31-33** <sup>31</sup> "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.