

"Lord God, You have appointed me as a bishop and pastor in Your Church, but You see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked Your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon Your Word. Use me as Your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all."

"Sir, we would see Jesus."

JESUS IS THE BREAD OF LIFE

Gospel -- John 6

24 When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. 25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 26 Jesus answered them, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 So they said to him, "What should we do to carry out the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent." 30 Then they asked him, "So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform?" 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Jesus said to them, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 "Sir," they said to him, "give us this bread all the time!" 35 "I am the Bread of Life," Jesus told them. "The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty."

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What did you have to eat the night of July 29th? (Can you remember?) Maybe you remember. Maybe you don't. I ask about that night because a reputation was being destroyed, perhaps permanently. If you'd been watching major league baseball you might have seen an almost no-hitter by Sean Newcomb of the Atl. Braves. Meanwhile the media was pumping out the story that 25-y/o Newcomb, back when he was an 18-y/o, was guilty of sending out offensive tweets into cyberspace, words and sentences anyone could search for, and they did, and There are numerous examples of people losing their employment for the seemingly eternal words that they employed. The internet never forgets.

But a greater deception is that any sinner can hide sin. The sin is inescapably permanent. No one is safe in the world. Almost nothing can be hidden. 'For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me,' Psalm 51:3. Any sin, not just what the internet doesn't forget, must be dealt with, must be accounted for, must be reckoned with.

Sin is not content. Sin is not full, not ever. This means a sinner has to look for more than just the next meal. There is a better bread; there is a food that lasts.

Food That Endures Makes A Difference

1. Between works and faith

Jesus got away, but not for long. Overnight, He and His disciples had crossed the waters and went to yet another place by the sea of Galilee. The crowd of 5,000 men that had just been fed followed after, probably learning from the local fishermen where Jesus went. This bunch was eager for more food, more wonderment, more performance. It seemed like a fine cycle to them; give Jesus an audience, get hungry, let Him feed them, repeat. Maybe when they were strong enough in numbers He would lead them to conquer the politics of the day and set up a throne in Jerusalem. They call Jesus 'rabbi' with every intention of eating more miracles and about zero intention of letting Him teach them.

Instead, Jesus challenged them. He said they'd missed all the signals He sent about real salvation. He said not to look for food that spoils, but food that endures. *He called this food that endured the Bread of Life.*

This Bread of Life would be what they hadn't asked for, searched for, or had a recipe card to make. The Bread of Life would come in a different way from a different place. This Bread of Life would not be as complicated as the normal get-out-of-it-what-you-put-in. It would not come by the way of the world.

These crowds had a number of misconceptions, all of which we can't consider here, but the worst was *their* question how they might be able "to carry out the works of God." After all, Jesus had said to "work for" bread that endures. Yet they were focused on the wrong point. Jesus was not talking about them winning their bread in a day's work; or about their growing grain as the farmer; grinding the grain as the miller; or becoming the bread-baker. The Bread of Life would be furnished for them. The bread of life, as from a benevolent king, would be supplied to them. The One God sent would be the only Miller, Baker, and Butler. "The work of God is this; to believe in the One He has sent." *Jesus took their focus on works and redefined the word.*

Could it be any other way? Imagine trying to reproduce the miracle of feeding the 5,000. Imagine the crowd miraculously making more leftovers than ingredients, as Jesus had the day before. Imagine their own bread solving their problems permanently, removing their sins completely, and bringing them close to God.

To have bread that really solved their problems and food that endures, they would have to eat something that safeguarded their eternal reputation before God. They would have to eat something that removes death and its counterparts. They would need a meal that nourished a conscience to life without guilt.

Jesus was already urging this bunch to look much deeper than their stomachs and to consider their souls. He was getting them out of the daily grind and into the good news. He wanted the people to stop chasing their tails and brooding over what this world might bring them. Every breakfast, lunch, and dinner would still let sin, death, devil, hell and bad consciences remain.

Good food, day in and day out, takes hard work and honest labor. Food that lasts means, according to Jesus, that which the Son of God will give. There is no flavor like the good news that God gives a meal for free, and that meal is the only meal that really matters. There is no flavor that simply putting your faith in God brings on the Bread of everlasting life.

So elsewhere Jesus says:

- 'What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?' Mark 8:36.
- 'Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well,' Matt. 6:33.

- 'Lay / Store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where thieves cannot break in and steal and moths and rust cannot destroy, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,' Matt. 6:20-21.

The people really wanted to know; what about Moses? What about manna? What about making it snow bread? But Jesus says this is better than all of that, and it's by faith alone. There are no magic words and you can't prepare God with a holy recipe. You can forget what saints Benedict, Francis, and Augustine have to say if it doesn't fit obtaining this bread by faith. *Jesus denies even Moses the ability to share the food that endures.* You don't need to or rather cannot prepare special grain offerings and butchered meals to maintain your relationship to God. Those would have to be repeated anyway. The food that endures also makes a difference ...

2. Between hungry and full.

This Bread, as described, caused an eternal hunger. The people finally got the point that Jesus offered better bread than they could have previously believed. They finally want Him to give them His kind of bread.

The same problems adhere to us. We must also find ourselves at the point of hunger. If we really want bread that endures, it will have to solve the words that we've said with our forest-fire tongues. Just one silly word, just one needless oath, just one online comment or tweet is recorded on our soul. Take the professionals who have lost their jobs and their reputations as example. Worse than that, our good things that try to make up for those blots and blemishes can't conceal our wrong. Even if we could please God without faith, it would not mean we could stop displeasing Him.

The thoughtless inhabitants of this world have no such eternal hunger. They chase after what to eat, what to drink, what to wear, etc. I heard about a man in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, recently, who dashed back into a burning house to rescue something from the fire. What was he trying to save? a child? a pet? a family heirloom? No, two cans of Bud Ice Premium. That's right -- beer. Can you imagine a food that is less important or more fleeting? The police stated, "It is not advisable to push past rescue workers in an attempt to 'save your beer.'" Let me offer you something similar today, "It is not advisable to push past church in an attempt to love the world."

So let me tell you about the kind of Bread that Jesus was talking about, the food that endures, the Bread of Life. Have you ever gone to a restaurant or seen a movie and you realized it wasn't all that enjoyable because you weren't with anyone? You would have enjoyed it if only you were with a person who enjoyed it with you, and then it was almost like then it was a happy memory? Without that person, maybe a like-minded friend or a special someone, it was not fun and in fact forgettable? As it turns out the solution to their hunger wasn't an actual foodstuff or a meal. The Bread of Life was not oven-baked, nor Moses' manna, nor angel food. *This Bread of Life Jesus had been talking about was Jesus Himself.*

The Bread of Life is from heaven. Its solution is heavenly salvation. No, the Bread of Life does not satisfy those who expect to and are used to getting hungry every day and filling that hunger with something salty or sweet to eat. It is hard to imagine a heavenly Bread of Life that can therefore be permanent. But to know that it is Jesus, who satisfies our hunger and thirst, really puts it into perspective: Those of us with sins forgiven will never hunger and thirst for human approval. Those of us with faith in Jesus will never hunger and thirst again to worry whether we can do enough before God. Those of us who are baptized into the family of God will never hunger or thirst for what the Father might think about His children. He is our Father! Jesus was enough! We are approved -- by faith in Him alone! Whenever we taste death, believers in Jesus may become sad. But they will never grieve bitterly like the rest of men without hope anymore, who haven't tasted the comfort that our Bread of Life can offer and seal.

Have you ever seen those Snickers commercials where Terry Crews or Betty White or some other obnoxious celebrity is acting cranky toward their friends? Then they get a Snickers bar and they turn back into a normal happy person. We can all relate to being "hangry," just the right combination between hungry and angry. Hunger and thirst makes us touchy, grouchy, unfriendly. But satisfying your hunger can change you, can't it? The eternal Snickers bar, the Bread of Life fully and thankfully satisfies our eternal hunger.

The reason is that Jesus has swallowed our punishment. Jesus has tasted our bitterness on a hill the shape of a skull. Jesus drank from our cup of denial and betrayal to spare us its poison. He tasted death that we might not. He was betrayed to the nails and spear we earned; all sin's wages in a day's work, all in a slip of a tongue, all sin's wages in an electronic message. Jesus took the shame of our public outcry and tarnished reputation to the cross. The Father stamped His eternal approval on that punishment and credited us with Jesus' perfect reputation. That's what changed us.

- 'Taste and see that The Lord is good,' Psalm 34:8.
- Come, you who have no money, buy for free and eat, you without money. Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. Let your soul delight in abundance, Isaiah 55:1-2.
- 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled,' Matt. 5:6.

I don't know where this world is headed. It may soon be a crime to sing certain songs, say certain pronouns, or talk in an accent. If our sneaky cell phones are recording everything we say, maybe no one really has job security. But we are tired of being force-fed the meals of this world anyway. So *we will work for food that endures* by setting aside devotions with our families and personal time to hear God speak to us in His Word. We will see the meals God prepares in church and Bible study on Sunday. We will talk with God. We will view such chances like sustenance we cannot live without. Imagine if we didn't feed ourselves daily! But then recall days we've gone without a care for the Bread of Life. Let's turn aside from the meals of this world with their temporary value. We have the Bread of Life, the Friend of sinners, Jesus Christ, the food that endures; and what a difference that makes!