

# WHAT FEEDS US?

**John 6:35, 41-51**  
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**First Christian Church**

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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.

41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' <sup>42</sup>They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' <sup>43</sup>Jesus answered them, 'Do not complain among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. <sup>46</sup>Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

In today's Scripture reading Jesus makes a very important claim. A claim that seems to be at the very core of the gospel message, the very core of who Jesus is and what Jesus does. Jesus boldly states within this passage that He is the bread of life and that all who believe in Him will be eternally filled, eternally satisfied. Within this passage we see Jesus plainly stating that He is the one who will bring eternal life, salvation, and resurrection. Jesus so boldly identifying himself as the source of salvation is actually a fairly rare occurrence in the Gospels. For much of the story of Jesus' earthly ministry we see Him teaching, and preaching, and healing. Jesus talks much about His heavenly Father and His Kingdom, but for the most part Jesus leaves the crowds and even the disciples to make up their own mind about who He is. Here however Jesus comes right out

and says it. He is the source of eternal life, and whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. You would think that this would be a sort of light bulb moment for those following Jesus, a chance for them to finally have the scoop on exactly who Jesus is and what He is here to do, and yet apparently that is not the case. The text tells us that they viewed Jesus' statement that he is the bread of life as being very controversial and they respond with an air of skepticism or with "grumbling and complaining" as the text says. This idea of Jesus being the "bread of life" is extremely confusing and troubling to the crowd who is gathered around Jesus. The people's reaction to Jesus' words left me a little bit confused I must admit. I was left asking what were they expecting when they encountered Jesus? How was the Jesus they found in this story so radically different to their expectations that they are left arguing about his claims? However as I dug deeper into this story and spent time in prayer over this passage, I feel that Jesus claiming to truly be the bread of life has some equally challenging ramifications for us as well. Seeing Jesus as the bread of life, while being a core essential of the Christian faith, nonetheless poses some challenges for us when we try to live by this belief. This story has a lot to teach us. So let's dig into the word of God together and see how Jesus being the bread of life speaks to us, challenges us, and if we let it, how it just might change us as well.

As always when dealing with scripture it is crucial not to just pluck out a story and treat it as a one off, stand-alone event. Each story in the gospels happens within a timeline, within a framework of events which often impacts the way in which the story is received and this one is no different. Our reading today comes from the sixth chapter of John. Earlier in this chapter we see the two well-known miracles which we talked about two Sundays ago, the feeding of the five

thousand, and Jesus walking on water. John tells us that after those two hall of fame miraculous displays of God's power Christ has opted for a change of scenery and is across the Sea of Galilee in Capernaum with His disciples. The great crowd probably still numbering in the thousands have searched the countryside for Jesus. They have looked high and low for the one who had fed them a couple days back. Finally they have found Him and in the verses leading up to this they are asking Jesus what He will do next, what is the next sign He will perform for them. They have been fed, taught, and amazed, and now they are wondering what else Jesus can do for them. But when they find Jesus their expectations are challenged rather than met. Instead of more handouts or more signs Jesus confronts them with the grandeur, the hugeness of who He is. He says that He is the bread of life, sent by God to bring them into God's eternal plan. He then challenges them to believe in Him and have eternal life. They respond to this with disbelief and questions. How can he say this? Isn't this the Jesus we have always known? Mary and Joseph's little boy? How can He say that He is sent from heaven to bring us into eternal life? This crowd of people certainly didn't find what they were looking for. They expected more teaching, more food. They expected Jesus to provide more sustenance for the life they had in their daily life. Instead Jesus offers them so much more, eternal life, a new life, a transformed life with a belief in Jesus at its very core. Jesus then challenges them yet again by offering them a completely different view of how they came to be standing in front of Jesus now. Jesus tells them that not one of them could have found Him without God drawing them to Jesus. He basically tells the crowd that they are not there on their own but rather that God has called them, guided them, and led them to this opportunity to have their entire life changed by believing in

Jesus as the bread of life. They thought they had found Jesus, but Jesus turns the tables on them and says that this is simply proof that God had found them and was calling them to respond in faith. I believe that it is this complete flipping of the script, if you will, by Jesus that is such a challenge to the people around Him. They thought that they had sought out Jesus in order for him to add something to their daily life, instead Jesus tells them that God has brought them here to offer them a chance to change their lives completely.

In this I feel that there is a strong message to us as the church, but more than that this scripture should speak to each of us on an immensely intimate and personal level. The Jesus we encounter in this text is just as challenging to us as believers today as it was to that crowd in Capernaum. You see as with the crowd Jesus does not just seek to bless or add to the life we have but to completely transform it. Sometimes I think we miss that message. Sure our life is impacted by our faith as evidenced that you are sitting here in worship rather than sleeping in or seeing if the fish are biting. But do we really let Jesus transform the very core of our lives. So often like the people in this story we are tempted to view our lives as something we have created, our family, friends, careers, hobbies etc. And it is easy to expect Jesus to just be added in where we have time for him, to give us that little bit of added peace, or security, or inspiration. But such an understandably human approach to following Christ is not what believing He is the Bread of life is about. When we expect Jesus to simply fit into the lives we live that is viewing Jesus more as the sprinkles of life, or the Hot sauce of life, something to be added in to make what we have a little bit better. But to believe that Jesus is the bread of life is to completely rearrange our priorities to put Him at the center. If Jesus is the bread of life then His love will be at the core of every

relationship that we have. Jesus' grace will be present in every conversation we have, even the tough ones. If Jesus is the bread of life then every decision we make will be done considering His will and His work in the world. If Jesus is the Bread of our lives then our lives really won't belong to us nearly as much as we would like sometimes. Having Jesus as our bread of life means that we constantly seek to feed ourselves by growing our walk with God. It means that we will engage our faith every day. Let's be real, if all of us only ate once a week we would be pretty thin and sickly. Having Jesus as our life's bread means daily digging into His word. Daily spending time in prayer. This is hard, this is challenging, and this takes work. But church there is great and wonderful news in all of this. When we learn to live with Jesus as our life bread. Then as Jesus promised in this passage we will never hunger or thirst.

No that doesn't mean don't go to work tomorrow, or that you will never catch a cold, human life still is what it is for better or worse. But when Jesus is our bread of life the deepest, soul deep needs that we have can be met by Him. There is no greater human need than to be loved and accepted. We all have this need and honestly the world around us preys on it. How often are we told if we looked like this we would be worthy of love, or if we achieve this, or own that then we will be worthy of acceptance. How often does this lead us to comparing ourselves to those around us and struggling with insecurity when we feel that we come up short? When Jesus is our living bread though, we find our worth in Him. We know that He created us, loves us, and accepts us in a deeper and fuller way than we could ever imagine.

Likewise we all have a deep need to have purpose and meaning in our life. The world around us offers an endless variety of self-help books, and even

college classes to help us “find ourselves” and our purpose. When Jesus is our bread of life though we realize that each one of us has been specially designed and called by God to live out His purpose in our lives. And that each step of our journey can be used by God to bring us closer to living our calling. No matter your age, station in life, or even your job, God has a purpose and call that is specifically yours. When Jesus is our daily bread we never lack for a sense of purpose. And our lives have rich and ultimate meaning that we can’t find anywhere else.

As humans we all have a deep need for a sense of security. We seek it in relationships, in padding our bank accounts and in buying the best insurance. All of these are fine things but when Jesus is our bread of life we have ultimate security in knowing that no matter what, we are a part of God’s eternal plan and eternal Kingdom.

It is hard to truly live with Jesus as our bread of life, to rearrange our priorities, to discipline ourselves to pursuing spiritual growth. But when we have Jesus as our life’s bread, we will know fulfillment, peace, purpose, in ways we could never experience any other way. And better yet, when we in the church are filled up and stuffed with the living bread of Christ, then we will be equipped to extend and show the living bread to the people out there. Amen.