

# ***The Bread of Life!***

John 6

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Pastor Jim Rademaker

The people had been there all day listening to Jesus, and now it was late. Time for supper. But they were far from home. Far from supper. The best thing to do? The logical thing to do? The only thing to do? Send them all away to the nearest villages in order to get something to eat. But with Jesus, there's always another way. A better way.

Jesus took the bread and fish, a measly five loaves and two fish, and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks. And breaking the bread and fish, He gave it to his disciples to hand out to the crowd of thousands. The best thing to do? Questionable. The most logical? Not at all. The only thing to do? Not with Jesus. And there was enough for everyone, and then some. They all eat and had their fill. They were satisfied. Stuffed. And still, there were leftovers. Twelve baskets none-the-less.

What was the point? The people were fed. Jesus took care of them. But there was more. It was a SIGN. A sign pointing to Jesus. Who was He? No ordinary man. No great organizer of men or entrepreneur. No mere religious leader. No magician. He was none other, then the Son of God. And the intent of the miracle was not merely to feed people's stomachs, but to feed their souls. That they, that we, might believe in Him, put our faith in Him. Trust Him. Follow Him. And be changed by Him.

And the people did follow Him. After the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus left. The disciples took a boat across the lake and Jesus would follow later on foot. Not by land, but by water. Walking on the water. Another SIGN. Who was this man? Truly, the Son of God!

*On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea ... saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.*

Seeking Jesus. That's a good thing, right? Maybe. It depends. Seeking Him for what?

The bread and fish had satisfied them; filled them. But only for so long. Soon, they were unsatisfied again. Hungry again. The food they had received only lasted so long. Like us, they would have to eat again, and again, and again. It's never enough, is it? It never really satisfies. Not for long anyway. So what do they do? They chase after Jesus in order to get more. More temporary food. Give us more of *that* stuff. That's what we need. That's what we want. That's what we're really seeking, really after.

*When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you."*

Jesus told them, what he tells us. Stop chasing after food that perishes; food that is here today and gone tomorrow. Food that you'll eat until you die. (Douthwaite)

What are you chasing after? What are you hoping will fill you, satisfy you? Money? Career? Comfort? The right relationship? The respect of others? Entertainment? Retirement? Something in the future?

Be nature, we're all hungry, and not just for food. We feel the hunger pangs every day. That gnawing discontent. That gnawing emptiness which can't be filled by the various breads of this life. The pains that no drug, legal or illegal, can numb. The diseases that wear down and eventually destroy our bodies. Broken relationships. Disappointments. Unfulfilled dreams. Death, that robs us of our loved ones. Our own death, that's always looming over us. There's this empty, nagging hunger, that nothing in this world can fill.

We're hungry for the bread of life. And we try satisfying our hunger in so many ways. We try filling it with work, hoping that achievement and success will make the hunger go away. But the harder we work, the hungrier we get. We fill it with play, seeking fulfillment in fun and hobbies, travel and recreation. We try relationships, hoping to find in the other, what we're missing in ourselves. We fill it with busyness, which distracts us from the hunger pangs.

(William Cwirla)

What's a common denominator to all of these various foods? They're all of this earth. All of this world. Like us, that's what was on the minds of the people in the crowd. The things of this world. It's easy to do, isn't it?

But nothing seems to work. There's no food that fills, no bread that takes away the nagging hunger for something more, something real, something lasting. That's because our hunger is not for anything this life can give, but for the Tree of Life, the food that man, turned away from God, may not eat of. But God has not left us to starve in the wilderness of sin. He has sent Living Bread from heaven. (Cwirila)

Jesus says to us, *Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.*" I come, not to give you physical bread, but spiritual bread. Righteousness. Rightness with God. Life! Something you can't get anywhere else. Something you'll never find on your own or anywhere else. Living Bread. I AM that Bread. I am that righteousness. I AM the Bread of Life. Eternal life. Not from earth, but sent down from heaven.

*Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

*So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*

*Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*

Jesus didn't come just to give us more of this life, more of the same bread that never fills and never lasts. He came to give us something beyond this life, to give us Himself, the Bread of Life. "Given, for you. That you might be filled with Me, with my righteousness. Satisfied. And that you will live. Really live. And never die."

Those who believe in me will never hunger again. Those who don't believe in my will continue hunger the rest of their lives, no matter what they try filling their hunger with. And when they die, eternal suffering for their sins.

*For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

Put your faith not in the breads of this life, that are here today and gone tomorrow. Put your faith in the Bread of Life. *Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.* Shall be satisfied. In Jesus, the Bread of Life is given out. In Jesus, the Good Shepherd feeds His flock on a green hillside. He fills the hungry with good things, Himself.

Don't come to church to be entertained. Don't come to church for free food or donuts. If you're looking for free food and entertainment, you've come to the wrong place. A lot of other places will do a much better job at that. But if you're a sinner in need of a Savior, you've come to the right place. Come, be filled with the Bread of Life. Come, eat and drink, and be satisfied, forever! (Cwirila)

How did the people respond to this wonderful news? How do we respond? The disciples didn't really get it. Neither did most of the people. The problem? *"Their hearts were hard."* (Mark 6) Could the same be said of us? The problem isn't with Jesus and His words. The problem is with us, in our hearts. Notice how this hardness of hearts comes out as the text continues.

*So the Jews rejoiced and were glad in this good news, to finally find the Bread of life? No. So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."*

Do we ever do that? Grumble and complain because the Bible doesn't make perfect sense to us? Because it doesn't always say what we want it to say? *They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'"*

*... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

*The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ... When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" ... After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*

So Jesus said to the twelve (to us today), "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

"... and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. (MK 6) You and I are like that crowd. On our own, we're lost, like sheep without a shepherd. And so Jesus, the Good Shepherd, teaches us. Fills us, with Himself, the Bread of Life.

*They got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. Why? They were hungry again. Are you hungry? Are you seeking to fill something that's missing in you? An emptiness that won't go away? An emptiness that nothing seems to fill?*

Blessed are those who hungry and thirst ... for (righteousness) Jesus, *for they will be filled!*

If you're looking for free food and entertainment, you've come to the wrong place. But if you're a sinner in need of a Savior, you've come to the right place. Come, be filled with the Bread of Life. Come, eat and drink, and be satisfied, forever!