

## The True Bread – *John 6:22-40*

**Introduction** – We are born hungry, and this goes all the way back to the Garden (Gen 2:8-9). But it was also always important to discipline one's hunger for the right things (Gen 2:15-17, 3:6-7). In John 6, we have already seen Jesus provide food for a hungry multitude, providing a sign that He is the Son of God. And an overriding theme throughout this chapter is that we are to come to Christ for who He is and not simply for what He gives. And while all good gifts come from God (James 1:17, 1 Cor 4:7), our temptations lead us to make idols of the gifts, perverting them, worshipping them, ruining them (Rom 1:25) and blaspheming the One who gave the gifts. Augustine famously said, *"Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee."* However, our restless and sinful hearts cause us to seek Him in wrong ways. In fact, our hearts are dead to God (Eph 2:1-3). But God wants far more for you than to simply be your bread-god. He offers Himself as the true bread, the bread from heaven that gives life to the world.

**Seeking Jesus for the Wrong Reasons** (vv22-26) – On the day following the miraculous feeding of the 5000 men plus women and children, we find that some number of them travelled as well by boat to Capernaum seeking Jesus. But they are actually surprised to find Him there (v25). They are diligently seeking Jesus and shouldn't that be a good thing? But Jesus isn't impressed and seems to blow the opportunity (v26). Jesus says they were not seeking Him because of the signs. This is not a contradiction to v2; the signs were causing them to seek Jesus, but they were not seeking Jesus because of what the signs were pointing to. Their bellies had been filled, they were impressed with his miraculous healings, and if He was a greater Moses, they wanted to make Him a revolutionary deliverer (v14). And so, Jesus calls them out, "you aren't really interested in how I got here; you are really interested in getting something out of Me."

There is a great subtlety here. On the one hand, we are to seek the Lord with all our needs, even our daily bread. But the Lord's Prayer presupposes that we are coming to the LORD, the One who's name is to be hallowed over all heaven and earth, and to whom we submit our will to His, *"Thy will be done..."* In that context, it is right and proper to fill your prayers with pressing physical, daily needs, just as a son would do towards his loving father. Therefore, v27, *"do not labor for the food which perishes"* is not an absolute command, but rather a rebuke to those who had Jesus right before Him and yet were more interested in the sign: more food!

**Work for the Food that Endures to Everlasting Life** (vv27-29) – The goal, the end, the purpose of seeking Jesus, is for the food which endures to everlasting life (v27). Jesus wants far more for us than what we are seeking. The things of this earth are needed and to be enjoyed (and thanked God for), but they cannot be sought for the sake of enduring fulfillment (Matt 6:19-21, 10:39).

It would do us well to remember Abraham, who was overjoyed by the gift of Isaac, the son of his old age and the son of the promise. But even his son was not to occupy the place that God alone should occupy in Abraham's heart. God stepped in with the command to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to Him (Gen 22:2).

Jesus says that this food which endures to everlasting life He will give *"because God the Father has set His seal on Him"* (v27). This seal may point back to the baptism of Christ when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, equipping Him for the ministry He was to do for the Father. It also might refer to the seal that was placed on offerings by the priests to signify that they were acceptable and approved for use as a sacrificial offering, which would be an ominous statement that He would be the living bread that would one day be broken.

**What is This Work?** – *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent"* (v29). In other words, when people believe in Jesus, God is at work. This is not the work we do for God; it is the work that God does in us (Eph 2:8-9). *"Believe"* is the verb form of *"faith."* Remember the prologue again – *"For as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name..."* (1:12). *"Believe"* shows up 9 times in chapter 6 and 5 times in this passage alone (6:29, 30, 35, 36, 40). And the chapter culminates with the profession of Peter on behalf of the disciples: *"...we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (v69).

**What are Signs For?** (vv30-35) – That wasn't the answer they were looking for. They want more proof. They still want more signs. In fact, they are hungry and they want Jesus to provide daily angel-food just like Moses did (vv30-31). If they just saw more signs, they claim they would believe. The hold up, it seems, is that Jesus isn't doing enough. He needs to perform first. But we aren't to look for signs to satisfy nor to bread that perishes. We are to let signs point us to the thing it signifies, or the Person. Jesus corrects their misunderstanding of the manna and Moses. The manna was not the bread from heaven. It was a sign. The thing it signified was the true bread that God sent down from heaven. Paul says the same thing in 1 Cor 10:1-5. The rock was Christ and the food and drink they partook of was Christ. The manna fell from heaven and after one day it was all rotted. And Jesus says, "*do not labor for the food that perishes.*" The manna pointed to Christ, it was the sign. Christ was what the sign pointed to. And what Jesus was now offering them was that "*true bread from heaven.*" But that bread is not a thing, it is a Person and He gives life to the world (v33).

**"Lord, give us this bread always"** (v34) – Just as the woman at the well said she wanted the living water, so these people want that heavenly bread. That woman didn't realize how much she needed Jesus, she just wanted the ease of living water. Jesus shows her by telling her to "*go get your husband.*" She needed forgiveness – but that becomes offensive to hear. Jesus wants to give far more than what they are asking for. And so He says,...

**"I AM the bread of life..."** (v35) – We have the first of seven "I AM" statements in this particular grammatical construction. Clearly John is pointing to Jesus' deity, and this will become clearer and clearer (we had already seen a similar but slightly different construction in 6:20).

**The Bread of Life to Everlasting Life** (vv36-40) – They said they would believe if they saw signs (v30). Jesus is right before them. They see Him, but they do not believe (v37). The ability to see is a gift. It does not matter what kind of evidence you give a lost soul; they cannot see until God opens their eyes and gives them sight. The question should not be "*what signs have we seen?*" but rather, "*do you see?*" And now, Jesus displays the great confidence and optimism He had in the Father and in His sovereign work to give life to the world. It does not bother Jesus that they do not believe. He will not lose a single one that the Father gives Him (vv37-38). All that are given to Him will be raised up to eternal life at the last day (vv39-40). There is a beautiful and yet incomprehensible truth about the absolute sovereignty of God in election and the true open-handed promise and invitation that everyone who believes in Him, anyone who wants Him, can come to Him.

It makes us nervous to see that the control in all of this is in the Father's hands and not in ours. But this is really good news. You come to Christ because the Father gives you Christ, or rather, the Father gives you to Christ. If it was up to you to come to Christ, you would not come. If it was up to you to not later be lost, you would stumble and fall away. But if it is up to the Father, and Jesus says it is, then nothing and no one is lost. What are you to do with this? You are to believe what Jesus said. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.