

# I AM the Bread of Life

## John 6:32-40

### INTRODUCTION

I love bread. The truth is, I probably love bread too much. No doubt I would have a much thinner waistline if I loved vegetables as much as I love bread. But I don't. It's bread.

- It can be soft yeast breads, like what you would get at O'CHARLEY'S or Texas Roadhouse. Or it can be the hard-crust breads – the kind that cut your gums when you take a bite.
- When most people talk about their favorite restaurants, they usually describe some entrée. Me? I talk about the bread.
- Do you know they talk about punishing prisoners by serving them nothing but bread and water? That doesn't sound too bad to me. I'd prefer bread and Diet Coke, of course, but bread and water works.

Bread is one of the oldest cultivated sources of nourishment in human history. There is evidence that bread was a staple in our diets as early as 15,000 years ago. Archaeologists have found grinding stones that date back that far – and even farther.

So when Jesus makes this I AM statement in John 6 ...

I AM the Bread of Life

He identifies Himself with something that is very central to our shared human experience. Some commentators go so far as to say when Jesus made this statement He was identifying Himself as fully human, while the Light of the World statement connected Him to the divine.

Bread = Jesus' humanity  
Light = Jesus' divinity

But more than physical nourishment, with these words Jesus connects the bread imagery to the spiritual nourishment we receive in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Later in this service, you will hear me say:

In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks; broke it and gave it to His disciples saying, "Take and eat, this is My Body, given for you." Do this for the remembrance of Me.

The spiritual nourishment piece is important within this service, because it was on the first Maundy Thursday that Jesus ate the Last Supper – a Seder Meal – with His disciples. And Christians like us have been "remembering" that ever since.

- Five of our young people have completed their first communion instruction in the past month. Three of them will be served their First Communion this evening.

This phrase should remind us that there are two kinds of nourishment:

- Food for the body, which is necessary but not the most important.
- And food for the inner man, the spirit, which is absolutely essential.

What we really need is not food but *life*, and life is a gift. Food only *sustains* life, but Jesus *gives* eternal life.

This I AM statement is wrapped up in a big conversation that follows one of the most incredible miracles Jesus performed on earth. You can read about it in the first part of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of John. To recap:

- A large crowd of people had been following Jesus for some time. We will later learn that there were 5,000 men in that crowd, not counting the women and children – so maybe 15,000 – 20,000 people in all.
- Jesus had tried to get away from the crowds to no avail. He had crossed the Sea of Galilee, but the crowd followed Him there. While He sailed across it, they ran around it.
- So seeing them, Jesus puts a question to His disciples.

“Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” (John 6:5)

- Philip – the practical disciple – answered on behalf of the Twelve.

“It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” (John 6:7)

- Truthfully, Philip underestimated the cost. I did the math. If you were to order a three strip meal, with medium waffle fries and a large Diet Coke from Chik-fil-A – and we know Jesus would only order Chik-fil-A – you would pay \$10.09. Multiply that by the 5,000 men present, you would need \$50,450. And you haven’t factored in the women and children yet.
- Finally Andrew brought a young boy to Jesus. And with this little boy’s small lunch (a total of five loaves of bread and two fish) Jesus miraculously fed the throng with lots of food to spare.

That becomes a teaching moment for Jesus, which culminates in His I AM statement today: I AM the Bread of Life. It is a phenomenal statement, because in it Jesus makes five important statements about Himself.

### **#1: As the Bread of life, He is Essential for Life**

First, by equating Himself with bread, Jesus is saying he is *essential* for life.

- Notice He does NOT say “I AM bread FOR life.”
- He is the bread OF life.

He is the source of life.

We don't use bread as the main course. It is always a side item – even a freebie the restaurant throws in to give you something to do while you wait for the real thing to get cooked.

But Jesus is the main course. Life comes with Him. He is what we need. There's a little chorus Christians have sung for years:

He is all I need, He is all I need, Jesus is all I need.

## **#2: As the Bread of life, He is focused on the eternal.**

Second, the life Jesus is referring to is not physical life, but eternal life. A heavenly life. Look at verse 33:

For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6:33)

The crowds that followed Jesus were thinking about physical food. They wanted another free lunch. Jesus fed them Chik-fil-A once, but now He needs them to change their thinking. No more "earthly food" but "heavenly food."

- He tells them that what they need is the spiritual bread – that is the real life.

That's why the manna in the wilderness is such a good example here. Remember, they had to gather what they needed for that day. And what they didn't use would be full of maggots the next day. Each day, they came again. Nothing eternal about manna.

- Jesus wants the people to see Him as the Messiah – one who care about their eternal condition.
- He is not a short-order cook, providing for their daily needs.

## **#3: As the Bread of life, He is God**

I'm not going to spend much time here because it has been a part of all the I AM statements of Jesus so far.

- The phrase "I AM" is the covenant name of God (Yahweh, or YHWH), revealed to Moses at the burning bush ([Exodus 3:14](#)).
- It is also a phrase the Jews who were listening would have automatically understood as a claim to deity.

## **#4: As the Bread of life, He comes with an invitation**

Notice the words "come" and "believe" in verse 35.

Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)

This is an invitation for those listening to place their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

This might remind you of the teaching in the Beatitudes:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
(Matthew 5:6)

Jesus makes this invitation to "come and believe" all throughout the Gospels.

- Coming and believing are the responses we offer to the invitation He extends
  - Coming to Jesus involves making a choice to forsake the world and follow Him.
  - Believing in Jesus means placing our faith in Him that He is who He says He is, that He will do what He says He will do, and that He is the only one who can.

It is getting to be wedding season, graduation party season. You will likely get an invitation or two. We have a niece who is getting married on Mother's Day weekend. The invitation has come.

- The invitation also requested a response.
- So too with Jesus. Are you coming? Will you believe?

#### **#5: As the Bread of life, He offers true satisfaction**

Fifth, there are the words "hunger and thirst."

Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)

Because Jesus is trying to switch the focus from the earthly to the heavenly, he is not talking about alleviating physical hunger and thirst.

- When Jesus says those who come to Him will never hunger and those who believe in Him will never thirst, He is saying He will satisfy our hunger and thirst to be made righteous in the sight of God.

At the Seder meal last Thursday, we were taught a new word:

Dayenu: "It would have been enough."

Every time we said that word we got to slap other people with a green onion. "It would have been enough if God had merely parted the water of the Red Sea and we had to walk through on muddy ground."

Jesus the Bread of Life is enough. It would have been enough that Jesus came to die for us but He gives us an abundant life and many other blessings so that in Him we find our satisfaction.

## APPLICATION

God created every human with a longing for eternity. It is a basic human desire.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

We live our lives trying to meet that longing, to fill that void. We try everything we can think of. Some good, some bad. Nothing works.

- We look for steak. But we are built for bread.

Every person needs to discover that nothing we do through our own efforts will ever fill that void that God has built into us. We are incapable of finding that eternal satisfaction on our own.

- The Bible also tells us that there is nothing we can do to earn our way to heaven because we've all sinned and the only thing our sin earns us is death.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

What we need is bread. More specifically, we need the Bread of Life.

Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)

When we place our faith in Him, Jesus satisfies our hunger and thirst for righteousness. He is our Bread of Life.

Amen.