

John 6:25-35, Isaiah 25:6-8
The Bread of Life
April 16th, 2017 Easter

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Jesus said, **“I am the bread of Life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever...”**

Today we are exploring Jesus claim to be “The Bread of Life” in the context of his resurrection from the dead. We are concluding our “Bread for the Journey” series with the tastiest bread of all, “The Bread of Life”!!

We know bread is called “the staff of life” as I said in an earlier sermon in this series. It is the staff we lean on for our journey from birth to death. It is the Bread of Life we lean on for our journey after death.



Have you ever stood at a grave and hoped that there was more life to come? Somehow when faced with death, many of the things that give meaning to our lives just don't seem important. Eating, sleeping, doing things, and working don't seem to be as important as we had thought. Even loving and being loved seem to end in futility if death is all that awaits us.

If this is all there is to life than we might as well **“eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die”** as Ecclesiastes says. But the good news is that there is more life. Life has a deeper purpose, and on this Easter Jesus offers us the “Bread of life, **“so that one may eat of it and not die.”**

Christ is risen!!! Death is defeated. We are given a food, a miracle food that sustains us in this world and into the next.



Food is an important way the Bible portrays Heaven. Heaven is portrayed as a banquet, a wedding feast. The Prophet Isaiah gave us a vivid picture of heaven.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death forever.

The greatest chefs in the world couldn't come close to this feast. Rich food and well-aged wine God promises to all people. That is what God will serve us. But did you notice what God eats? "God will swallow up death forever." God eats death; we eat eternal life!

The apostle Paul probably had this in mind when he wrote about the resurrection of the dead. "When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and the mortal body puts on immortality,

then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory'"

1 Cor. 15:54 Truly we have victory in Jesus!

How are we then to think of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Jesus has eaten death, tasted it fully, and swallowed it completely. But his resurrection proves that death is defeated! Christ is the victor. He has eaten the bitterness of the punishment for sin; so we don't have to. And we are now offered the bread of life, "so that one may eat of it and not die."

Jesus, in fact, when he states that he is "The Bread of Life" is stating that he is the source of life. He is the source and sustainer of our earthly lives and he is the source and sustainer of our eternal lives.



Our Gospel story today follows the story of the feeding of the 5000+ that I spoke of on Miracle Sunday. These 5000+ people followed Jesus around the lake of Galilee looking for more food from him.

The crowd really came seeking an earthly King, not a heavenly King; they wanted an earthly King who would meet their physical needs for free food, and a free nation.

Jesus recognized this - that they were merely feeding their souls on earthly bread. They were materialistic in their outlook, and their expectations for the Messiah were more on the lines of a cosmic bread machine than the living Son of God, the Bread of Heaven.

Jesus recognizes this and answers their questions. Not the ones they spoke, but the ones they held in their hearts. They asked “when he got there.” He replies and states emphatically **“You are looking for me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of loaves.”**

They hadn’t seen in the feeding of the 5000+ a miraculous sign of the Messiahship of Jesus,... but a free lunch. They showed up again to get another free lunch, and so Jesus spoke to them of deeper and more important things.

They had worked, or spent all day walking to get to Jesus to get more food and Jesus tells them, **“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”**

They want to know then, what great work they need to do to receive an eternal earthly food supply, still missing Jesus’ point so Jesus replies, **“The work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent.”**

It seems too easy. Get life, even abundant life, in this world and life in the world to come simply by believing? Yes, it’s true!

Simply by believing in Jesus Christ we receive abundant life in this world and life eternal!

It seems too simple to believe, but how great a change simple belief and the simple actions that flow from them make. Our beliefs when followed are an incredibly powerful force in our lives. They direct all that we do, say and think.

One summer, when my son Kevin was about 5, I took him fishing on a 65', 30 ton bay fishing boat. With the boldness and faith that was his, Kevin walked up to the captain, and asked if he could steer the boat. Kevin never believed for a moment that the captain would say no! But it surprised me, though, when the captain said yes and let Kevin climb up into the captain's chair and then with a small movement of his strong little hands sent that big boat back and forth across the bay.

Simple beliefs when acted on can have enormously good consequences for us and others. Jesus calls us to simply believe in him and then from that act of faith everything else in our life flows. The call here is to make Jesus, the Bread of Life, the center of our lives.

The crowd that day didn't believe in Jesus, they simply wanted more. They wanted more signs, more miracles, and in particular more bread. But Jesus knew they would never have enough. Most were interested simply in food, bread. "What will you do for me now," they seemed to say to Jesus?

But Jesus Christ reminded them as he reminds us, **"For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**

The very profound material meaning of this is that our very lives, our ability to take the next breath is dependent on Him through whom **"all things were created."** It is through the ongoing willing of God that we exist and can receive and enjoy any of the material blessings of this world.

Jesus says, **"He who comes to me will not be hungry and he who believes in me will never thirst."** In this world, as we act out of faith,

Jesus will meet our needs, not our wants and greeds, but our needs. And even when life is hard and evil, and even ends—Jesus’ promise, Jesus’ gift of eternal life is there for he is the Bread of Heaven.

Our major work, our most basic fundamental and important work is to believe, and even that is a gift. That is what Jesus meant when he said, **“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man WILL GIVE YOU.”**

It seems so easy, frustratingly easy, and so we get caught in trying to do some work to earn our salvation, our eternal life. But we as Christians must simply believe, receive, and then become what we are meant to be.

Ephesians 2:10 states, **“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”** As believers we have purpose. We have good works to do.

And all of us, as we go out into the world and do good works, we are becoming the people God has created us to be. We are fed by and sustained by and guided by the Bread of Life and given signs of our own salvation as we become signs of the Salvation of God to those we serve.

Jesus’ last supper is not recorded in the Gospel of John. It is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, but not John and this, they think, is why.

As time passed after Jesus’ ascension misunderstandings of Holy Communion began to grow. Some saw it as simply a remembrance of Jesus. Some saw it as a magical act that if you participated in it you got your salvation ticket to heaven punched and nothing more was needed. **“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day;”**

But John saw Holy Communion as a time in which Christ was truly present. We get that sense when Jesus says, **“those who eat my flesh and drink my blood ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN THEM.”**

Christ is present in the breaking of the bread as it is called, but bread, the receiving of sustenance happens mostly outside of church. For most of us the breaking of bread occurs three times a day.

So in prayer and thanksgiving, as we recognize Christ's presence, we can celebrate Communion anytime we break bread.

Anytime we eat, anytime we drink wine, or juice we can celebrate communion with Christ. Anytime we drink water we can celebrate the abiding presence of the "Living Water."

John did not want us to believe or think that it is only in Church, or in worship, Christ is present with us giving us living water, the bread of life. Christ goes with us into the world and all we need to do is recognize him abiding in us, being present with us.

We then can turn Communion, not into a time in which we just remember Christ, but a time in which we take the Bread of Life into us and then into the world. We remember Christ in the breaking of the bread that declares Christ's death until he comes again

Imagine what it can be like to take Christ's presence into the world, Holy Communion into the world and be the Body of Christ, the Bread of life to others? The words spoken in the Sacrament of Holy communion are called the Great Thanksgiving.

Imagine taking Communion with you by giving a little thanksgiving before eating in the Mall, in Berger King, or even Basha's as our Huddle group will do on Thursday. In this way you can Communion with others or simply with yourself and Jesus and be a witness in the world.



Imagine you are the one that Christ is sending into the world through Communion to proclaim his death until he comes again.

I want to give you a simple sermon application to take with you. I want you to take Christ into the world by saying a prayer of thanksgiving, in essence, remembering him, anytime you eat your daily bread.

Imagine bringing Communion with God to others through a simple prayer of thanksgiving. Imagine the message of Christ being spread as you go to restaurants today and pray.

Today is Easter. We celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and his victory over death. We acknowledge that the power of death is all too real. We see it in our world in wars, hunger, poverty and disease. We see it in ourselves when we give into our greed and temptations.

But today we are here to claim the powerful victory won by Jesus Christ. Today, we celebrate a power that is stronger than death. Jesus is able to enter the most hopeless situations and transform them. That is the message of Easter. Death has been swallowed up and transformed by the power of God. That is the resurrection victory!

Today we are given a foretaste of the resurrection feast that will be ours in heaven. **“I am the bread of life,” Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever.”**

My friends, it is Easter. Today you have eternal life. You have the power of Christ’s resurrection in you to turn whatever of death’s power you are dealing with into life. Today, let us eat the bread of life and bring the Bread of Life into the world.

Amen!

Adapted from “Bread for the Journey” by Rolf Svanoe