

Text: John 6 (various verses)<sup>1</sup>

Series: ***Life in His Name*** ... The Message of John's Gospel

Title: Part 16 -- Jesus, the Bread of Life

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Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

There are only two miracles recorded in all four Gospels ... can you tell me which ones?

- The Feeding of the 5000
- The Resurrection

**<sup>1</sup> After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup> And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. <sup>3</sup> Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. <sup>5</sup> Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" <sup>6</sup> He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.**

**<sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." <sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, <sup>9</sup> "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" <sup>10</sup> Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. <sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.**

**<sup>12</sup> And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. <sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"**

**<sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.**

Bread – it's a basic thing in life.

Bread is called "the staff of life"

- speaks to basic needs of all kinds – security, food, shelter, clothing,

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The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 – other than the resurrection of Jesus -- is the only miracle of Jesus that's recorded in all four Gospels.

- I think we know why the resurrection is included in all the Gospels – it's the foundation story of the Christian faith
- Without the resurrection we have nothing!

So why the story of the bread that fed 5000?

- Perhaps because of how important bread is
- because of how it speaks to what is basic in our lives.
- Or possibly it's because this event speaks to the most basic need of human life ... the need for eternal life!

Bread is so ordinary but it's that very ordinariness that sets that stage for an extraordinary teaching by Jesus.

The feeding of this great crowd was about more than meeting their basic need for food – there's something much deeper going on here.

The text gives us **two clues** that something much deeper is happening here. It's a profound truth, but it's a simple truth and so I'm going to keep the focus of the message simple today.

### **Clue #1 – Jesus gives a “test”**

NB. V.5-6

- Jesus sees the crowd and asks Philip “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”
- **Remember:** “When an omniscient being asks a question it's not because he's looking for information.”
- **It's a “test”**

Andrew finds a boy with 5 small loaves of cheap barley bread and 2 little sardines – but what difference can that make?

Then it happens:

- Jesus takes the bread & fish, blesses it, breaks it and **KEEPS ON BREAKING IT UNTIL EVERYONE ATE TILL THEY JUST ABOUT BURST!**

### **Clue #2 – Jesus gives a “sign”**

- a sign points to something – this miracle of bread and fish was designed to tell them something.
- What they thought it meant: their king had come – the one who would provide all that they needed
  - o who would break the Roman tyranny

- who would bring them prosperity & peace
- who would fill their stomachs!

They had a picture of Jesus developing in their minds – but it wasn't the one that Jesus wanted them to have.

The Bible contains **so many “pictures”** of Jesus you could almost call it God's family album. And it is crammed with pictures! There are so many pictures – no one picture alone can capture all that Jesus is in his person!

There are pictures that point us to **Jesus' as human:**

- he was born as a **baby** and developed as a **child** who grew “in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.” -- Luke 2:52
- **friend of sinners** – Matthew 26:17
- weeping **tears** for us again and again, but especially before the cross – Luke 22:44

There are pictures that point us to **Jesus as Transcendent:**

- He is the **Alpha & Omega**, the beginning & the end – Rev 1:8
- He is the eternal **Word**, with the Father from the beginning – John 1:1
- He is **Son of God & Son of Man** – Matthew 3:17; Luke 19:10; Daniel 7:13-14

There are pictures that point to **Jesus as Deliverer:**

- At his birth he was proclaimed as “**Saviour**” – Luke 2:11
- He was declared to be **warrior** against sin who would come with fire to purge the world – Matthew 3:11
- He was the **suffering servant** who gave his life as a ransom for many – Mk 10:45

There are pictures that point us to **Jesus as Care-giver:**

- He is the **water** that quenches thirst – John 4:13
- He is the **Vine** that brings fruitfulness – John 15:1
- He is the **Light & the Life** – John 8:12; 14:6

There are pictures that point us to **Jesus' Work:**

- He is our great **High Priest** who intercedes for us with God – Hebrews 2:17
- He is our **Prophet & Teacher** – Luke 24:19, Matthew 8:19
- He is our **King** – John 18:36-37

**BUT NOT THE WAY THE PEOPLE OF GALILEE PICTURED IT!**

Jesus knew he would have to correct their understanding of him – so he withdrew to a mountain by himself.

- in the night he crossed the Sea of Galilee (he walked most of the way across the lake ... and took a boat the rest of the way!)
- the next day, the crowd pursued him and found him.

**<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> Do not labor 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.” <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”**

**<sup>30</sup> So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ” <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup> They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”**

**<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.**

Notice the way the crowd searched for Jesus

- they crossed several miles of open water to find him
- they were intent in their pursuit

BUT they were searching for the wrong reason.

v.26 – Not because they saw the “miraculous signs” but because they ate bread and had their fill.

- wanted manna from heaven like in the old days – “bread from heaven” (v.31)

Hunger is a very powerful thing!

These were poor people – people who lived from hand to mouth

- the possibility of a regular and sufficient supply of food was a powerful draw!
- I’m pretty sure I would have missed the sign, too!

So many times in our lives we miss what God is really trying to teach us.

- we get caught up with our own wants and desires
- we demand from Jesus “bread” when he wants to give us something else.

- We really don't know what we really need – our hearts & heads get very confused & distorted.
- The picture in our minds needs to be corrected!

c.f. Ben Patterson's (dean of the chapel at Hope College) story re hot dog stand

- dinner appointment with a friend who specialized in French cuisine, you know, those little, elegant dishes that wonderfully exotic, but are gone in three bites!
- Patterson had missed lunch that day and was ravenous!
- the directions weren't clear – he got lost – and in his searching, he passed a hot dog stand – several times!
- the aroma of the hot dogs was irresistible! – he stopped and ordered a couple of dogs, and an order of French fries – after all, French cuisine wouldn't fill him up!
- when he finally arrived at his friends home, he could hardly eat a bite – he even left food on those little French plates!
- reflecting on that experience, Patterson saw it as...

**“a parable of how the great enemy of the best is not usually the worst, but the good. Life, and ministry, is full of hot dog stands, easy and pleasant detours from the best. They leave us stuffed in our spirits, overloaded and soul-crammed, not with the Bread of Life, but with spiritual junk food.”**

Our real need, Patterson wrote, is for “the food that endures to eternal life” (John 6:27), but so often we chase after “spiritual junk food” that satiates our hunger, but never truly satisfies.

**We need to let Jesus tell us what we really need.**

- **we need to let Jesus tell us when our wants are getting in the way of His will.**
- **We need him to correct our picture!**

**“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’” John 6:35**

Jesus simple declares: “It's all about Me! I am the One who will give you what you really need!”

In other words, Jesus told them that the bread was a picture of Him and what He wanted to do for them.

In the Greek text of the NT there is a little word not translated – literally, Jesus said, “I myself am the bread of **THE** life.”

***Jesus' bread gives us THE life ... eternal life!***

**“Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” John 6:27**

We eat to live – some people live to eat – but usually we eat to live!

- if we don't eat, we don't live very long!

“Daily bread” is of concern to God

- o cf. Matthew 6:11 – the Lord's Prayer calls us to look to God for it

Daily life has value to God – He wants us to enjoy it & use it to the full.

- o This life is a gift from God to be enjoyed!

Cf. boy in SS – “How many would like to go to heaven?”

- everyone raised their hands except one boy
- “Derrick, don't you want to go to heaven?”
- “I'm sorry, Mrs Spellman, but my mommy told me to come right home after Sunday School.”

But compared with eternal life, this life is so short!

Why work for “food that spoils” Jesus asks? Why not work for food that endures “to eternal life.” (v.27)

Cf. Paul Azinger

- PGA golfer sharing testimony of how he battled back from a life-threatening bout with cancer
- Told story of a friend's unusual meeting with a rich man on an airplane
- Man set next to Azinger's friend in first class – very unusual surroundings:
  - o Seat of beautiful leather
  - o A fan hung above the man's head
  - o Tray made of mahogany
  - o VCR, CD player and computer – all within arms reach

“Why would anyone go to the expense of having these things installed in an airplane?” “Because this is my home?”

Azinger used the story to make the point: it's a tragedy when we convert into a home something that was designed for travel.

- this life is a vehicle that will one day take us to our eternal home
- this life is temporary – nothing lasts forever!

cf. Immensity of eternity

If you have a steel ball the size of the earth

- every 1 million years a sparrow would land on it to sharpen it's beak
- by the time the earth had worn down to the size of a BB **ETERNITY WOULD HAVE JUST BEGUN!**

We were made for eternity! Cf. Eccl 3:11 “God has set eternity in the hearts of men”

- our desire for love that lasts forever comes from that hunger for eternity
- our desire to live lives that are remembered as worthwhile comes from that hunger for eternity
- our desire for purpose in life comes from that hunger for eternity that God has built into us!

We wonder why we become bitter and disappointed as we see those things in which we've invested our lives crumble away ... but NOTHING we build lasts; everything we do is temporary.

Jesus promises us the only "bread" that will satisfy the hunger for "forever" – the bread of eternal life.

**<sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but he will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> 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."**

***Jesus' bread promises a secure life***

**"And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." John 6:39**

Food supply is a perilous issue for many people in our world today.

- there are famine stricken areas of the world where people live from meal to meal, not knowing if they will eat again.

The possibility of a secure food supply is one of the things that prompted the people to follow Jesus across the lake!

We hunger for security in life.

Jesus promises that those who come to him "will never go hungry" and those who believe in him "will never be thirsty." (v.35)

- one taste of the bread that Jesus gives will fulfill our hunger forever
- one drink from the water that Jesus gives will satisfy our thirst for eternity!

**"I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day." (NIV, v.39)**

Cf. The building of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco

- built in 1937 at a cost of \$77 million
- two stages, the first slow, the second much faster

- first stage: 23 men fell to their deaths – work ground to a halt because of fear!
- Second stage: put a net, the largest ever built, under the bridge
  - o Gave men confidence – able to “dance on the steel”
  - o Net caught 10 men who would have fallen to the deaths

The security that Jesus gives us enables us to live this life with joy and without fear because we can be confident that “underneath are the everlasting arms.” (Deut 33:27)

**<sup>41</sup> So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup> 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’?” <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will 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 he who is from God; he has seen the Father.**

**<sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers 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. 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.”**

***Jesus’ bread is the Father’s gift***

**“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me...” John 6:44-45**

The people of Jesus’ day were pretty confident that they could accomplish whatever God might require of them so they could work for the blessing of eternal life. They asked Jesus...

**“What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” (John 6:28)**

Jesus’ answer is simple & disarming...

**“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” John 6:29**

God has done the work – he asks us to believe and receive what He’s done for us.

We don't just figure it out ourselves – God directs us to Jesus. And we rest our hope on His promise in His Word.

c.f. Steve McQueen

- famous Hollywood actor – lived the same kind of wild, rugged life he portrayed on screen.
- BUT alcohol & a failed marriage left him empty
- In his need he attended a crusade by Billy Graham and asked to speak with Billy.
- Graham spent several hours with McQueen, sharing the Scripture and giving him hope.
- McQueen struggled with the idea that God could give eternal life to a man with such a sinful past.
- But Titus 1:2 gave him hope & confidence:

“<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, <sup>2</sup> **in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began** <sup>3</sup> and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;” **Titus 1:1-3**

- He asked Billy for something to write the verse down on – Billy gave him his Bible.
- McQueen died some time later while getting treatment for cancer.
- He died, with Billy’s Bible opened to Titus 1 and his finger resting on verse 2.

<sup>52</sup> **The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”** <sup>53</sup> **So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.** <sup>54</sup> **Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.** <sup>55</sup> **For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.** <sup>56</sup> **Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.**

<sup>57</sup> **As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.** <sup>58</sup> **This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”** <sup>59</sup> **Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.**

*Jesus’ bread guarantees eternal life*

**“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.” John 6:54-55**

The wording here seems strange – they were tough words to accept!

- some people began to fall away because they couldn't grasp Jesus' meaning! (v.66)
- some outside the faith accused the early Christians of cannibalism because of these words.
- But Jesus told them that his words had to be interpreted spiritually...

**“The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” John 6:63**

Jesus' point is simple: If by faith you have tasted of the “bread of life” you share in the life of the Jesus.

Once we've tasted of Jesus:

- 1) eternal life is ours NOW – “HAS eternal life”
- 2) resurrection will be ours THEN – “WILL raise him up”

Let me tell a simple story to bring it all home. It's warm-hearted story from a book entitled, “Moments for Mothers.” It's probably a work of fiction but it gets to the heart of simplicity of Jesus' offer of eternal life.

The Rogers were a devout Christian family

- they had a concern to make sure that their children understood Jesus' offer of eternal life and so they would ask each child to express in their own words their relationship with Jesus and their hope of heaven.
- It was seven-year-old Jimmy's turn – this is what he said...

“I think it will be something like this in Heaven. One day when we all get to go to Heaven, it will be time for the big angel to read from the big book the names of all the people who will be there. He will come to the Rogers family and say, “Daddy Rogers?” and Daddy will say, “Here!” Then the angel will call out, “Mommy Rogers?” and Mommy will say, “Here!” Then the angel will come down to call out Susie and Mavis and they will both say, “Here!”

And finally that big angel will read my name, “Jimmy Rogers” and because I'm small I'll jump up and shout real loud, “Here!” to make sure he knows I'm there.”

- a short time later, Jimmy was struck by a car as he ran to catch a school bus
- his family was summoned to the hospital
- they gathered around his bed

“They saw his lips move, just one word was all he uttered before he passed from this life. But what a word of comfort and hope for a grieving family. In a clear whisper, they heard Jimmy declare, “Here!” And then he was.”

Let me ask you one simple question today: Have you tasted of the Bread of Life? Do you have eternal life?

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song:** Jesus Messiah
- **Benediction**