

Dr. Joe Jursa's Sermon

Bread of Life - John 6:24-35 (Jesus For Forever)

During the month of August we will be looking at the book of John. In particular the passages in the sixth chapter that talk about Jesus and the bread of life. In scripture bread can have a far more significant meaning other than just something to put peanut butter and jelly on.

The idea of the sustaining quality of bread comes from the Jewish community in the days of the Exodus when the Israelites were in the desert. There was no bread to sustain their daily lives. Moses at the direction of God instructs the people about Manna.

Manna was a daily gift that God made available through God's love for Israel. Each morning the Jewish people would arise from their sleep and the ground would be covered with flakes when the dew dried. The flakes called manna could be used like flour to create the daily bread that sustained the people during their years in the desert.

Moses by the grace of God provided for the physical hunger of the people of God. The bread he gave was for their earthly life. But the bread which Jesus Christ offers is not limited to our physical needs in this world. The bread which Jesus offers, himself, sustains us for forever.

Listen to the beginning of this story of bread and life and everlasting life as told in John 6:24-35

²⁴ So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" ²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." ²⁷ 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. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." ²⁸ Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ³⁰ So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?" ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " ³² Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴ They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

We are so concrete sometimes. If we cannot feel it with our fingers, taste it with our tongues, or see it with our eyes we seem unable to wrap our minds around what Jesus is saying.

Jesus has left the mob and traveled to the other side of the sea. The mob follows because after all Jesus had just fed 5000 people with 5 barley loaves and two fish. Free food attracts people. In a community where basic necessities require work to come by, someone who could give you food, to the point that you and 5000 of your friends were full and there were leftover's was worth keeping around.

They were not looking for Jesus for the relationship he offered with God. They were not following because they recognized themselves as in need of spiritual help. They came because he could feed them and could heal their sick.

There were those who followed Moses who thought that the manna they fed on in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt was a gift from Moses, but it was God who was supplying their daily needs. They could not see beyond Moses to the real gift of daily life given from God to each of them.

Jesus offers to us the bread of life. But have our minds focused upon the bread that has smell and taste and feel. What about the real bread of life, Jesus offering of himself for our lives. Eternal life is ours because Jesus sacrificed upon the cross for us. Lasting, real, the bread that sustains through eternity, Jesus Christ himself is God's gift to you and me.

Maybe it is good to occasionally go back to the basics. I was separated from God, looking only at things that satisfy for today. God in grace and wisdom and from the enormous outpouring love of Christ gave me life everlasting.

For me personally that really begins when I think about my own baptism. Baptism is my beginning place with God. In baptism we affirm or our parents affirm a desire to be in relationship with God.

Sometimes it is good to remember our baptism. For me it was when I was but an infant. Mom and Dad came to the church with a bundle of baby in their arms. For dad at that time it was just to make mom and the families happy. They answered the questions the preacher asked. The same ones we ask today.

Beloved do you in presenting this child for holy baptism confess your faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Do you therefore accept as your bounden duty and privilege to live before this child a life that becomes the gospel; to exercise all godly care that he be brought up in the Christian faith, that he be taught the Holy Scriptures, and that he learn to give reverence attendance upon the public and private worship?

Will you endeavor to keep this child under the ministry and the guidance of the church until he by the power of God shall accept for himself the gift of salvation, and be confirmed as a full and responsible member of Christ's holy Church?

Did I know where God was going to lead me? No. Did I even know what was happening to me? No. But at baptism, God recognized me as part of the family of God. I became God's not because I did anything or said anything but because God loved me .

I had no more understanding than that mob that followed Jesus just for the food. But, now as I look back, I can see God at work in my life. I can reflect on my baptism and realize what it has come to symbolize in my life. I became God's.

Jesus was right; man does not live by bread alone. The word of God has become real in my life. My baptism was one moment in my life that I can point to and say without question; there God began a work in my life. Today after you have received communion by intenkcion, we would invite you to remember your own baptism.

The dancers will come in a moment and lead us into Holy Communion. They will then finish their dance by inviting you to come down the center isle and receive a piece of broken bread to dip into the juice.

Then you will be invited to come forward and remember your own baptism, God's beginning with you. You may choose to reaffirm your baptism by placing some of the water upon your head, by placing your hands into the water and remembering God's love or you may return to your seat. You may also choose to spend some time in prayer at the altar or in your seat.

Maybe at times you have been like the mob and followed Jesus for the physical relief and goodness he provides. But today at least for this moment you can remember that your life consists of more than bread and water. There is the wonderful relationship that has come to exist between God and you. Today you can celebrate your faith by remembering your baptism.

God has sought you far longer than you have desired a relationship with God. Before you ever came into the world, God had sent his son Jesus Christ to become your bread of life. We invite you to worship with our dancers as we prepare to receive the bread of Christ.