

## I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

A young man was getting ready to graduate from college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car and being from a rich family he knew that his father could afford it. As Graduation Day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautiful wrapped gift box. Curious, but somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather bound Bible, with the young man's name embossed in gold. Angrily, he raised his voice to his father and said, "With all your money you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house, leaving the Bible.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realized his father was very old and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. But before he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things.

When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart. He began to search through his father's important papers and saw the still new Bible, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. His father has carefully underlined a verse, Matthew 7:11, "And if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father which is in heaven, give to those who ask Him?"

As he read those words, a car key dropped from the back of the Bible. It had a tag with the dealers name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words....PAID IN FULL. How many times have we missed God's blessings because they are not packaged as we expected? We reject the gift we are offered because we do not understand it.

John 6:25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 26 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." 30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given 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 he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Today we are continuing in our series looking at the I am statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. We have already looked over the last 2 weeks at Jesus saying that He was the Vine and the Good Shepherd. Today we look at Jesus' words that He is the Bread of Life. What does that mean?

1. The Gift is Offered (vs. 25-27) –

The context of this encounter is interesting. In the beginning of Chapter 6 we read the account of when Jesus fed the 5000. After this amazing miracle, Jesus withdrew from the crowds because He knew that they “intended to come and make him a king by force” John 6:15. During the night Jesus walks on the water and the boat crosses the lake. The next morning, the crowd that had been fed by Jesus the night before, went to Capernaum in search of Him. When they find Jesus He says to them;

John 6:26 ... You are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

In other words he tells them not to seek or work for food that spoils but offers them something far better which brings everlasting life. He is telling them to seek eternal salvation over temporary substance.

Each of the “I am” statements represents a particular relationship of Jesus to our spiritual needs. Jesus is the light in darkness. He is the gate to security. He is the shepherd that guides and cares for us. In every “I am” statement Jesus reveals another aspect of His love and care of us. Today he is the bread that satisfies and gives life eternal.

Jesus is saying here that what bread is to the stomach, He is to the soul. All of us in life struggle to find meaning, purpose and worth. That is because God created us to be in relationship with Him but because of sin we are separated. We are not living the life created us to live. It was St. Augustine who noted that every single person has within them a god-shaped vacuum in their soul. We can and do attempt to fill that cavity with a host of other things, but finally nothing fills our hunger for purpose and significance except Jesus. You will never be truly content in life without Him.

Jesus' words were intended to lift the listeners from their barren, food-dominated existence to the recognition and acknowledgement of the supreme hunger of life that can only be filled with a different bread. Food and power blind the mind to the need for nourishment and strength of soul. – Ravi Zacharis

The story is told that as World War 2 was drawing to a close, the allied armies gathered up many hungry orphans. They were placed in camps where they were well fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with the situation. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he was put to bed. This particular piece of bread was just to be held – not eaten. The piece of bread produced wonderful results. The children went to bed knowing instinctively they would have food to eat the next day. That guarantee gave the children a restful and contented sleep.

When Jesus had fed the crowd, none of them had earned the meal they received. It was given them freely. Now Jesus is offering them a much greater gift - eternal life. In the light of such an offer we know what those who were there did not do. They must have accepted the gift with great thanks and praise. They must have immediately jumped at such a generous offer.

Have you ever tried giving someone a gift that they didn't want? Even though it cost you a great amount it is received with hesitation? Instead of receiving the gift Jesus offered, the crowd questioned it;

## 2. The Gift is Questioned (vs. 28-35) –

Understand what is happening here. Jesus is offering eternal life to the crowds. Instead of jumping at the chance they respond with two questions:

### a. The first reaction was – “OK... How much”? (vs. 28-29)

John 6:28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

Within every church, be it charismatic or conservative, there are the extremes of legalism and sensationalism. We see in this question from the crowds classic legalism. People ask what's the catch? What do we have to do to earn this gift. What work is required to get it? Nothing in life is free, right? Any offer that just looks too good to be true probably isn't true. Really, who can blame them. I am sure each of us has been offered a “free gift” in the past only to find out that there were strings attached. E.g. all the emails from Nigeria promising money.

Before we criticise these people too much let us remember that we are a lot like them, aren't we? We often seek to earn God's favour rather than just accepting it. God never told us that He would love us IF ... simply that He loves us. E.g. looking for your glasses while they are on your head. Sometimes we think that God would love us more if only we could only pray a little more or read the Bible longer or be involved with the church more or witness more etc. We think we can earn it if we can avoid the things that we know we should not do - not loose our tempers so quickly or not fall into lust or some other temptation or fall into this or that sin. But do these things really bring us closer to God? Will God really love us more if we do, or don't do, these things?

God will never love you more than He does right now, and He will never love you less than He does right now. What was Jesus' answer? Jesus' answer is a simple one, “Just receive”.

John 6:29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

A young fellow came forward in a Gospel meeting, earnestly asking, "What must I do to be saved?" The Christian worker responded to the anxious inquirer, "You're too late!" "Oh, don't say that," exclaimed the distressed seeker, "I really want salvation; I'd do anything or go anywhere to obtain it." "I'm sorry," replied the other, "you're too late for that. Your salvation was completed many hundreds of years ago at Calvary. It's a finished work! All you have to do is simply receive Christ.

A little boy came to the Washington Monument and noticed a guard standing by it. The little boy looked up at the guard and said, "I want to buy it." The guard stooped down and says, "How much do you have?" The boy reached into his pocket and pulled out a quarter. The guard said, "That's not enough." The boy replied, "I thought you would say that." So he pulled out nine cents more. The guard looked down at the boy and said, "You need to understand three things. First, thirty-four cents is not enough. In fact, \$34 million is not enough to buy the Washington Monument. Second, the Washington Monument is not for sale. And third, if you are an citizen of this country, it already belongs to you." We need to understand three things about the gift of salvation. First, we can not earn it. Second, it is not for sale. And third, if we accept Christ, we already have it.

b. The second reaction was – “OK... Prove It”! (vs. 30-35)

John 6: 30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: `He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

The other extreme to legalism is sensationalism. This means that we seek something sensational to validate the Gospel. Show us a miracle so we can believe you. Jesus answer is again a simple one;

John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Jesus basically said to them "you want to see a miracle, here I am. I am the miracle". God almighty laid aside His majesty and became one of us so He could die on a cross for our sins. His life was an even greater miracle than when God had sent the manna in the wilderness.

Remember that this is not a crowd unfamiliar to Jesus. A few hours before Jesus had done a mighty miracle in feeding 5000. If this had not convinced them nothing would have. Today we often demand that God to miracles to validate his claims while forgetting that He already has. e.g. Guelph evangelist - me praying for a miracle. Jesus has already done the greatest miracle – He became a man and died for you and me. He didn't want to be known as Jesus the miracle man, He wanted to be known as Jesus the saviour.

It is normal to want to see a miracle. It is OK to want the experience of power. When I went to Kuwait I was suddenly confronted with things that I had never experienced before. Demonic deliverance and miracles were common. Miracles are great, but they are not the basis of our faith. Years ago David Meece had a song called Some People Will Never Believe that said;

A lot of people now are dying in sin  
Waiting for a miracle to prove to them  
But though miracles keep happening again and again  
They still don't believe and they never will

'Cause you can heal the sick Raise the dead  
Turn the sky from a blue to red  
It don't matter what they hear or what they see  
Some people they never believe.

Luke 10:17-20 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

The greatest miracle that Jesus will ever perform is the miracle of salvation that happens when we accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord. I have seen amazing things in my life, but the greatest miracle I have ever seen is the miracle of a changed life.

Ronald Reagan once described these people well in a speech. He said: "a baby's digestive system is a lot like the American public today: insatiable appetite at one end and total lack of responsibility at the other end."

### 3. The Gift is Rejected (vs. 36-40) –

In the following verses we see that the crowds rejected Jesus offer of salvation;

John 6:41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

It wasn't just the crowds that turned away, but some of Jesus' followers;

John 6:60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" 61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? 62 What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! 63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. 65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." 66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

In a way the crowd's response was correct. They knew that God was holy and that they were sinners. They knew that something must be given to pay for sin. Something was required if they were going to be able to restore their relationship with God. Heb. 12:14 says that "without holiness no one will see the Lord." They knew that there was a price to be paid. The problem was that they didn't see that Christ was offering to purchase it for them.

Anniversary dinner at the Peacock - was paid for but we sat there waiting for the bill.

Perhaps they missed the gift because Jesus did not fit their image the Messiah. The Son of God should come as a conquering King. Jesus came to die to pay their debts.

One of the first time I preached they didn't know who I was – I didn't look the part!

The crowds rejected the gift that Jesus offered. How will you respond His offer today?

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

Jesus is still offering us the free gift of salvation today. Maybe you are here today and you are searching. Perhaps you recognize that there is something in your life that is missing. Perhaps there is a hunger in your heart that you have tried to fill with so many different things, but nothing has taken that hunger away. Jesus can fill that hunger today.

Jesus claim to be the Bread of Life really means that Jesus making a direct claim here to be God incarnate. He says that He alone is the source of everlasting life and that He alone can satisfy. You need to either accept or reject that claim. The everlasting life that Jesus offers us was purchased for us at a price. Jesus gave us his body, in that He died on a cross for our sins. He was broken so that we could live.

Maybe you are thinking the same thing the crowds thought. What do I need to do in order to earn this salvation. The answer is that you just need to receive it. You can do that before you leave the service today. Maybe you have been asking God for a miracle to prove that He is real to you. May I suggest that you simply look around you, there are many miracles of grace that surround you this morning. Lives that have been transformed.

If there are 100 steps to God, Jesus has taken 99 of them for us, but the last one is up to us. It is an act of faith. Will you accept or reject the offer?