

I Am the Bread of Life

John 6:22-35

BI: The only thing that can satisfy the hunger of the human soul is a relationship with God in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

Last week we began our study by asking the simple question, “Where do you believe happiness and fulfillment can be found?” From time to time all of us think “If I only had a certain possession,” or “If I could only accomplish that important goal,” or “If only I could make myself better, smarter, or more attractive in some way,” or “If I could only get my parents, my wife, my children, my boss or that special someone to do what I want... then I would be happy, content, and satisfied.

This way of thinking is endemic to the human condition because, you see, human beings were not created to live in a sinful world. We were created to live in the permanent presence of God where there is no sin, no selfish behavior, no broken relationships, no mistreatment or abuse, no sickness and no pain. But the introduction of sin into the world changed all of that. What it didn't change, however, is the fact that we were created in the image of God to live in the presence of God so our souls are frequently dissatisfied with our less than perfect circumstances in this very broken world.

Because of this dynamic, our hearts are constantly on the alert for something that just might fix our brokenness. Something exciting; Something that will comfort, heal, fulfill and satisfy; something of this world - something other than God.

John 6 is one of biblical texts that clearly demonstrates this dynamic and answers the question, “Where can broken human beings find satisfaction, fulfillments, and contentment in this life?”

Last week we looked at John 6 and said, “If you want to find satisfaction for your soul...

I. Don't miss the lesson of the loaves:

1. What is the lesson of the loaves? *The lesson of the loaves is that our desires tend to blind us from seeing and receiving the only thing that can truly satisfy our souls; namely, God in the Person of Jesus Christ.*

2. The focus of our study has been on the passage where Jesus feeds the 5,000. The point of the miracle was to demonstrate that Jesus is God. He is the God of infinite resources. He is the God who satisfies.

3. Think about it. There He was standing right in front of them; the God who entered covenant with them at Sinai, who gave them manna from heaven. The God whom they had not heard from in 400 years. He was standing right there among them, totally approachable, touchable and available, and offering them Himself in a very personal way. But all they could see was the bread. They didn't want God. They wanted free food, and *their desire for food blinded them to the infinitely superior goodness and satisfaction they would have found in the Person of Jesus Christ.*

4. One of the major themes in this section of the Gospel of John speaks to the marks of a false disciple. You see, John is indiscriminate here about who he refers to as a disciple of Jesus. In fact, at this point in the narrative anyone who follows Jesus – no matter what the motive - is called a “disciple.” But not everyone who claims to be following Jesus is a true disciple. This will become evident in verses 60 and 66 when many of them get fed up with Jesus and John says (66) “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.”

5. What is the primary mark of a false disciple? The primary mark of a false disciple is that *they follow Jesus for what they think they can get FROM Him rather than for who He is*. Notice v. 26: Jesus said to these so-called “disciples,” “*Truly, Truly, I say to you, you seek Me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled.*”

6. What does that mean? It means, “*You are following Me because you want more bread, not because you want Me.*” And this begs the question: Why do you follow Jesus? I want to suggest to you that this story is in the Bible because it is a universal problem that spans through all the ages wherever Jesus Christ is preached. Often when people learn what Jesus can do they follow Him as if he were a cosmic vending machine, not because He is their Redeemer come to reconcile them to God.

A. A startling example of this can be seen in the teaching of one of the early progenitors of the Charismatic movement. E. W. Kenyon (1867-1948) established some of the core doctrinal beliefs of what is now called the Word of Faith movement (think, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagan, Oral Roberts, *et al*).

B. He taught (and I quote), “The value of Christianity is what we get out of it. We are Christians for what we can get in this life, and we claim a hope of a world to come. We also *demand* that the God we serve and worship shall hear our petitions, protect us from danger, comfort us in sorrow.”¹

7. Now I realize most people are not as brazen about what they want from Jesus. But even true disciples can slip into following Jesus not because He is God and He is worthy, but because He can fix my spouse, my business, my past, my child, my loneliness, my

¹ From John MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship*, (2013), Thomas Nelson, (30).

pain, or *whatever consuming desire has mastered my heart*. And when this happens we begin to value Jesus for nothing greater than what we can get out of Him.

8. Now this may all sound ridiculous, but its amazing the lengths people will go to fulfill the longings and cravings of their hearts.

Read v. 27.

9. This is where we said last week: If you want to find true satisfaction for your soul...

II. Exchange Your Working for Believing (27-29)

1. The word “work” here means “To engage in an activity that involving considerable expenditure of effort.” What is Jesus saying here? He’s saying, “Stop working so hard to obtain the wrong things!” Think about it. This crowd invested a lot of time and effort just to figure out where Jesus went and then to catch up with Him on the other side of a five-mile-wide lake without a bus or motorboat. But you see, if you live in a third-world country providing food for your family is a big deal and it takes a lot of effort. When these people discovered that Jesus can provide all the food they could ever need, they were willing to engage in whatever effort was required to get more of that. More food. More bread.

2. Jesus us saying, “I didn’t come to give you bread that’s good today and is moldy tomorrow. I came to give you food that will give you life forever (cf. 4:13-14). And you should know I can give it because God Himself has set His seal on me. In other words, when God spoke out of heaven, and every time He heard my request for power to perform a miracle, He was stamping me with His unmistakable seal of approval.

3. Notice how they respond. Read v. 28

4. Now, let me interpret that for you. What they are saying to Jesus is, “What do we have to do to get You to give us bread that never turns moldy and is perpetually fresh so we don’t have to be concerned about feeding our families any more. You see, they were blinded by a *desire* for bread! Not for one instant did they see God standing before them offering them Himself. What ruled their thinking and behavior was *NOT* a longing for their Savior, but their *craving* for a free and never-ending supply of food. And they were willing to do anything necessary to get it!

A. It’s amazing the lengths to which we will go to get our desires fulfilled. We’ll take out loans. We’ll make threats. We’ll make deals with God: You might say, “God, if you will give me that promotion, I promise I’ll start tithing. Or “Lord, if you give me a husband I’ll never complain about my life again” (*Oh, yes you will!*)

B. Now, you may never have prayed such a prayer, but you might start reading your Bible more regularly so God will let you meet your financial goals. Or you might give more money at church, or treat your wife better if you think

your stinginess or crankiness is keeping God from taking away your loneliness or depression.

- C. It's exhausting to try to earn salvation by works. And it's exhausting to try to satisfy your soul by food and possessions, and relationships, and education, and accomplishments. Do you know what God calls it? Legalism, works-righteousness, and self-righteousness. And He hates that. But Jesus say "Come to Me... And I will give you rest" (Mat. 11:28). So what does God want from us?

5. Listen to Jesus' response: (Read v. 29).

6. The word for "believe" here (πιστευω) means "*To believe to the extent of complete trust and reliance.*" Do you see what He is doing? He is calling them to stop putting their trust in their own efforts and start putting their complete faith in Him... not for bread, but for eternal life. Stop working and start trusting. Stop trusting in the object of your temporal desires and start trusting in Jesus. Everything else is a false refuge and a functional idol of your heart. Believe that having Jesus is infinitely better than having your temporary cravings, longing, and desires satisfied.

- A. Beloved, it is so important that we come to realize that its okay to not have our every desire fulfilled in this life. God never said He would grant you all your wishes and take away your every pain. In fact, it may well be that you *unfulfilled* desires are the very thing that He is using to draw you into a deeper relationship with Himself.
- B. Remember Deut. 8:2–3 "And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ And he humbled you and *let you hunger* and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, *that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*"
- C. Some of you are tempted to think, "If only God would get all the issues of my past tied up in a neat bow, then I could be happy and fulfilled." Others think, "If only God would make me well, then I could really would be content." Still others believe, "If only God would solve my financial problems, then I would be satisfied." But did you ever consider the possibility that all of those unfulfilled desires are God's way of weaning you from the world and drawing your to Himself?
- D. I was reminded this week by a fellow Biblical Counselor, Janet Aucoin,² that God has indeed promised all those in Christ that we will one day experience

² Janet Aucion, *Changing our Expectations: Dealing With Unfulfilled Longings*, a lecture given at the Faith Biblical Counseling Conference – Track 6 (2013). Available online at www.frlafayette.org.

complete and eternal fulfillment to the core of our being. But not yet. Why? Because we're not home yet. We are still living in a sinful world waiting for the return of our glorious Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

- E. Until then we will experience many unfulfilled longings and desires. And all of them are designed by God to show us our need for Christ and to invite us into a deeper walk with Christ where we can experience true joy, satisfaction, and contentment even in the midst of our trials.
- F. And not only that, but whenever we do experience something truly wonderful in our marriage, on the job, with our children, in our finances, or simply with a friend over a good meal, we can be incredibly thankful and joyfully content knowing that our gracious Redeemer has just given us a small taste of what He is preparing for us in His presence forever.
- G. You see, faith believes God's promises of future grace. It resonates with Psalm 34:8 "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!" and Psalm 42:1 "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

7. Now with all of this in mind, you might think these so-called disciples would jump at the offer, right? But no!

Read v. 30-31

8. You see, they were still blind to who Jesus was and what He was offering. Somehow they thought that the miracle He performed when He fed the 5,000 was a lesser miracle than what Moses did for Israel in the wilderness when He gave them manna. But listen to Jesus' response.

Read v. 32-33

9. In other words, Jesus is saying, "You are wrong on two crucial points. First, you're wrong about Moses. He didn't give you the bread. All he did was tell you God's procedures for how to collect it off the ground when it appeared. It was My Father who gave you the bread. Second, the bread wasn't even real bread. It was merely a shadow that pointed to the real Bread that was to come. The manna could only sustain your life for a day, but the bread I give will sustain give you eternal life." Now, watch how they respond.

Read v. 34

10. This is the same response the woman at the well gave when Jesus offered her living water. But just as she still thought He was offering better physical water, these men and women thought He was offering them better physical bread. But He wasn't. He was offering them Himself.

Read v. 35

11. To “come” to Jesus is the same as to “believe” in Jesus. It is coming to a place where we view ourselves as spiritually bankrupt and believe with all your heart that God has sent His Son for the purpose of satisfying all your debt and reconciling you to Holy God. For us, Jesus is life. He is the one who reconciles us to God. He is the One who secures our eternity. He is the One who rescues us from the just punishment of eternal death in Hell. As physical bread give physical, so the spiritual bread that God sends from heaven guarantees spiritual life for all who will willingly and joyfully eat.

12. The sad reality, however, is that these false disciples of Jesus ultimately rejected His offer to give them spiritual life. Why? Because their desires blinded them to the awesome goodness and glory of Jesus.

13. Ultimately, this is the cause of unbelief in every person who rejects Jesus. The reason people reject Jesus is because they are ruled by desires that compete with the promises of Christ.

14. Kinds of desire that lead to rejection of Christ:

- A. Security - The scribe to whom Jesus said, “Foxes have holes, and birds have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay His head” (Mat. 8:20).
- B. Peace/Acceptance - The seed on the path is dies when tribulation and persecution arises (Mat. 13:21)
- C. Wealth/Comfort - The seed among the thorns dies because of cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches (Mat. 13:22).
- D. Respect - Jesus’ home town rejected him out of jealousy. He was making Himself out to be “holier than thou” (Mat. 13:57).
- E. Signs & the Supernatural – The Pharisees and Saducees came to him and asked for a sign. Jesus said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign” (Mat. 16:4; Lk. 11:29)
- F. Material Possessions – The Rich Young Ruler (Mat. 19:22; Mk. 10:22; Lk. 18:23). “He went away sad because He had many possessions.
- G. Praise & honor of men - the Pharisees (Mat. 23:5; Mk. 12:38-40)
- H. Money - Judas (Mat. 26:14-15).
- I. Love of acceptance - Peter denied the Lord 3 times (Mat. 26:69-75; Mk. 14:66-72).
- J. Power / Control - The Pharisees delivered Jesus up to Pilate because of “envy” (Mat. 27:18).
- K. Status - The Pharisees “were afraid of Him for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching” (Mk. 11:18).

- L. Racial Superiority - People in the Synagogue (Lk. 4:25-30) “I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land,²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.
- M. Safety, security, maintaining the status-quo - The people of the country of Garasenes where Jesus cast the demons into the pigs. “They asked Him to depart because they were seized with great fear” (Lk. 8:37).
- N. Love of Family - “I will follow you but first let me first say farewell to those at my home” (Lk. 9:62).
- O. Love of Law - When Jesus healed the woman who was bent over the ruler of the synagogue declared “There are six days in which work ought to be done...” (Lk. 13:14).
- P. Love of self-righteousness - Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners (Lk. 15:1-2; 18:9).
- Q. Love of acceptance - The parents of the healed blind man were non-committal about Jesus because they feared being kicked out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22-23).
- R. Love of Country - Caiaphas the high priest said, “it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should die” (Jn. 11:32).
- S. Desire to be worshiped - After raising Lazarus from the dead the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the whole world has gone after him! (Jn. 12:19).
- T. Love of personal glory - “Man of the authorities believed in Him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”
- U. Love of position - Pilate was afraid he would be accused of opposing Caesar (Jn. 19:12).

15. You see, if we let them rule us our desires and cravings have the power to blind us to the awesome goodness and glory of Jesus Christ.

16. Last week I told you about John Piper’s son who rebelled against the Lord for 4 years and gave himself over to a life of wanton sin. I read his confession that the reason he did it was not because of some complicated philosophy of life but simply because he wanted to drink cheap sangria and sleep around. God changed all that when he saved Him. And at the end of the article that contains his testimony Abraham writes:

The only ultimate reason to pray for [your rebellious son/daughter], welcome them, plead with them, eat with them, or take an interest in their interests is so that their eyes will be opened to Jesus Christ. And not only is He the only point, but He's the only hope. When they see the wonder of Jesus, satisfaction will be redefined. He Himself will replace the money, or the praise of man, or the high, or the sex that they are staking their eternities on right now. Only His grace can draw them from their perilous pursuits and bind them safely to Him—captive, but satisfied.

Conclusion:

1. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ today the word of God is calling you to stop looking for life in other things. You have been blinded to the awesome goodness and glory of Jesus Christ by your own desires. Its time to repent. It's time to shift your confidence away from the failed proposition that you can make yourself happy and satisfy your hungry soul. Jesus is the Bread of life and He is offering Himself to you.
2. If you already know Christ, than the word of God is calling you to stop allowing yourself to be ruled by your temporal desires. You will never be able to undo the past and your will never be able to control the future. But God has given you everything you need to be content and joyful in this life. Stop thinking about what you don't have. Be thankful for every good thing that you do have which God has given as a state of the perfect fulfillment and joy that is to come.

Start reminding yourself daily of what the apostle believed (2 Tim. 4:8 "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to *all who have loved His appearing.*")

And preach to yourself Col. 3:1–4 "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

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