

## John 6:24-35

<sup>24</sup>When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. <sup>25</sup>When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

<sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup>Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

<sup>28</sup>So they said to him, “What should we do to carry out the works of God?”

<sup>29</sup>Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent.”

<sup>30</sup>Then they asked him, “So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform? <sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32</sup>Jesus said to them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup>“Sir,” they said to him, “give us this bread all the time!”

<sup>35</sup>“I am the Bread of Life,” Jesus told them. “The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.”

## Hunger and Thirst No More

### I.

Hunger has changed the world. Talk to people who lived through the depression or were born near the end of the depression and they will tell you about the hard times—the lean years. It was hunger and lack of having things they needed that led that generation to store all kinds of things because they never wanted to go through such lean times ever again.

Some of the most poignant history in the Old Testament is about Joseph and his brothers. The whole story revolves around hunger. It was to prevent starvation and preserve the line of the Savior that God allowed Jacob’s sons to carry out their evil plot and sell their brother Joseph into slavery. Eventually Joseph would convince Pharaoh to order enough grain to be stored up during the good years to save the people of Egypt from starvation and even have enough food to sell to people of other countries. Hunger eventually drove Jacob to send his remaining sons to Egypt to buy some food. Hunger was what led them all to go to Egypt to live with Joseph until the lean years would pass.

Hunger is a powerful motivator. Most of us haven’t experienced *real* hunger. It may be a little longer between meals than you would like sometimes. Perhaps there have even been times when the fare gracing your table has been a little lean—or maybe just a little plain. But real, honest to goodness hunger? Few of us have known it.

Last week’s gospel saw the hunger of the 5,000 men, not counting women and children, being satisfied by Jesus with a picnic lunch. Perhaps more of these people were familiar with real hunger than we are. Every one of them would be astonished to walk through a modern grocery store and see the abundance and variety of foods we have available today.

Today we join them in progress after digesting their meal with a long walk back around the lake. Perhaps there had even been a few enterprising fishermen who saw a way to make

a quick denarius by ferrying a boatload of them back to their own side.

Most of them had taken note of what John told us at the end of last week's gospel: "When Jesus realized that they intended to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself" (John 6:15, EHV). Between last week's gospel and today's gospel the disciples headed back to the other side by boat. A squall came up, and Jesus appeared, walking on the water. With his almighty power, Jesus stopped the storm.

This crowd likely knew nothing of that appearance. But they *had* seen the disciples leave without Jesus. "When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, 'Rabbi, when did you get here?'" (John 6:24, EHV). How could he *possibly* have gotten here so quickly?

They had seen the miracle of the breaking of bread. They had tasted and seen the goodness of God in that miraculous multiplying of food, but their stomachs were quickly emptied again. Their desire to make him King by force to make sure their tummies were always full hadn't abated. The dreams were big—maybe not just dinner, or even day after day of free lunch, but more stuff.

"Jesus answered them, 'Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.'<sup>27</sup> Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval'" (John 6:26-27, EHV). Jesus is really referring to everything human beings do to support our lives when he talks about "food." Meat goes bad, vegetables spoil, houses and cars need constant attention and repair, tools rust and break down, clothing wears out. Everything that human beings have and stake so much importance on is temporary.

## II.

This is what Jesus was calling attention to. "So they said to him, 'What should we do to carry out the works of God?'" (John 6:28, EHV). The crowd got it—to a certain extent. Did you?

Once they got through their heads that Jesus was about more than stuff, they finally admitted that there is something God wants for you that is far beyond the things people need for daily life. There is an eternal life out there. God wants his people to enter eternal life.

But how? The Ceremonial Law governed the way the people would worship. It was filled with sacrifices to atone for sin, but there was always something looming out there—keep the law. There was, they decided, no free lunch when it came to keeping the law. Those sacrifices were to pay for sins that had been committed, but there must be something they were missing. There must be a way to get a leg up—to get in the good graces of God.

"What should we do?" Just like the rich young man who came to Jesus thinking he had kept the whole law, but understood there was still something missing, they thought they, too, could do something more to get right with God.

These days there seem to be two kinds of Christians. There are those who think they're in pretty good shape because they go to church regularly and put a decent sum in the collection plate when it passes by and participate in the work of the church by volunteering for all kinds of things. And there are those who see nothing but their own mistakes and think God doesn't love them—and *can't* love them because of the sin in their lives. Ok, there's a third kind, and maybe even more. There are those who are just convinced that God loves them no matter what, and it doesn't matter if they continue to do things that sin

against God because he is such a loving fellow he will surely just ignore their wrongdoing.

### III.

“Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent’” (John 6:29, EHV). The premise of their question was wrong. They were looking for something *they* could do to enter eternal life. There is certainly something God requires to enter eternal life—perfection. Not one human being can achieve it. That’s why it must be the work of God. Jesus called attention to exactly that—“This is the work of *God*: that you believe in the one he sent.” God does the work. God creates faith. It is because *God* does the work that this work pleases him.

Stop working. Start believing.

“Then they asked him, ‘So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform?’” (John 6:30, EHV).

Does *your* sinful nature want something to do, too? Does *your* sinful nature insist that there must be *some way* to participate in your salvation?

A long time ago someone chastised me for not giving people specific things that Christians “ought” to do. Faith is just too little to ask. There must be a list somewhere of stuff to do. Or, as the crowd thought, Jesus must do something spectacular to inspire this kind of faith—faith must be *bigger*, somehow.

If Jesus needed a little help, they would provide him with an example miracle that would work for them. “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’” (John 6:31, EHV). Look, Jesus, Messiah is supposed to be a greater prophet than Moses. Moses provided food for the whole nation for 40 years. *That’s* the kind of miracle that will inspire this “faith” you want us to have.

### IV.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world’” (John 6:32-33, EHV). Look, people, Moses didn’t do *anything!* It was *God* who gave manna to the people in the wilderness. It is *God* who has sent the One who gives you *real* bread today—bread that gives *eternal* life, not just an earthly existence.

“‘Sir,’ they said to him, ‘give us this bread all the time!’ <sup>35</sup> ‘I am the Bread of Life,’ Jesus told them. ‘The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty’” (John 6:34-35, EHV).

The Word of God is powerful. The light starts to come on in their minds. Though they still don’t fully understand, at least some of them realize that Jesus is talking about something superior—something beyond their knowledge and understanding. They trust him enough to desire more. “Give us this bread all the time.” Help us to understand more.

“I am the bread of life,” says Jesus. Eating and drinking is believing in Jesus as the Savior. Eating and drinking is the faith in Jesus that is the *only* thing that saves. Works can’t get you closer to God—only Jesus can.

Those who believe hunger and thirst no more because eternal life is theirs. There is no longing for what you already have. There is no thirst, because you already have the waters of life in Jesus. There is no hunger for salvation because you already know that your sins are forgiven in Jesus.

You have it. You know it. Now invite someone else to dine with you in God’s Word, that they, too, may hunger and thirst no more. Amen.