

Bread of Life

Lesson 7

John 6:26-35; 47-51

Opener

Bread is considered the “staff of life.” In other words, it is the essential food necessary for human survival. In the Middle Eastern countries, bread is the staple food for any meal. You may have meat, fruit or vegetables occasionally, but *every* meal has bread.

This fact is important to understand in today’s lesson. Jesus describes himself as the “bread of life.” In his society, bread would have been understood as the primary form of nutrition.

So Jesus is saying He is the sustainer of life—both physical and spiritual. We cannot live spiritually, or know God, without Jesus Christ. As he says in John 14:6, “I am the Way, the Truth, and Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Scripture

Key Verses: Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever be hungry again. Those who believe in me will never thirst. . . . Yes, I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. However, the bread from heaven gives eternal life to everyone who eats it. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; this bread is my flesh, offered so the world may live.” -John 6:35; 48-51

Discussion

vv. 26-35

A large crowd of people had just seen Jesus perform a miracle the day before. He had fed over 5000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish! Impressed by this, a large crowd had followed Jesus across the lake and met him the following day with a question: “Teacher, how did you get here?”

They asked this because they knew that Jesus had not gone in the boat with his disciples across the lake (v. 22). John relates in vv. 16-21 how Jesus walked on the water to the disciples’ boat. But Jesus doesn’t choose to boast about his ability to walk on water. He doesn’t even answer their question at all, but challenges their reason for following him: “because I fed you” (v. 26). In other words, the people are more concerned with the condition of their stomach than the condition of their heart.

Like the woman at the well and Nicodemus, Jesus knew the hearts of these people. He knew what they really needed more than they did.

Ask: Do you feel certain that you know better than anyone what you need to get through life? What are these needs? (Money, friends, success in career, entertainment, etc.)

Like the woman at the well and Nicodemus, the people here were only looking at the surface level—the things they could see—and not the inner, spiritual necessities of life. Jesus knew this and tries to open their spiritual eyes to look beyond their physical needs.

Most people in life are like the crowd. They are primarily concerned with the here and now—the things of this world. But the Bible tells us that “the things of this world are passing away” (1 John 2:17). It is only the spiritual things that will last.

Like many people today, the crowd thought this “eternal life” was something they had to achieve through something they could do. So they ask Jesus, “What does God want us to do?” even after he had told them that he would GIVE them eternal life (v. 27). So Jesus sets them straight: they are to “believe in the one he [God] has sent” (v. 29).

As in John 3:16 and many other verses, Jesus makes it clear that the only way to have eternal life is to BELIEVE in him. The action was completed at the cross—there is nothing else we have to do to achieve salvation except to BELIEVE in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

But the people still did not understand. They wanted another miracle! Jesus tries to explain that the greatest miracle of all is that he is God who has come down from heaven as man. As with the woman at the well, he uses something they can relate to—bread—to describe himself. And like the woman, the people thought he meant a tangible bread that they could eat, and they tell him they want this bread.

Jesus boldly responds, “I am the bread of life.” In essence, Jesus is saying, “I am all you need to get to God. You will never need anything else to have eternal life.”

vv. 47-51

Jesus tries to help the people understand he is not talking about a bread that will fill their stomachs. He responds to their question about the manna—the food God used to feed the Israelites in the desert—by comparing it to himself. Yes, the manna was a gift from God, but the people still died. It did not help their souls. But Jesus—the bread of life—is much more than manna. He is the way to receive eternal life and avoid spiritual death (separation from God).

In v. 51, Jesus refers to the bread as his “flesh.” In other words, Jesus became a man of flesh and bone so that he could become the sacrifice for our sins on the cross. If he had not become flesh, he could not have died on the cross and we could not have eternal life.

Ask: What do you think Jesus means when he says, “Anyone who eats this bread will live forever?”

His life and death were a gift to us. Yet we have to receive this gift, much like in eating we receive the food into our mouths and bodies. Only those who receive the gift Jesus offers will have eternal life.

Jesus also compared himself to bread at the Last Supper with his disciples, just before he was arrested and crucified. He broke the Passover bread and said, “This is my body, broken for you” (Luke 22:19). His body was broken for us on the cross.

Application

Are you like the crowd that wanted bread? Do you know the difference in your physical needs and spiritual needs?

Do you have the bread of life? Does He make a difference in your life?

Do you share this bread with others around you who are spiritually hungry?