

It's About Bread!

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[0:00] I speak to you in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Please be seated. Did you get an idea of the theme for today yet?! Bread.

Bread. It's about beautiful, wonderful bread. This bread comes from Parecca's Italian Bakery, the best Italian bakery in the world.

Or maybe in Schenectady, whichever is smaller, I'm not sure. It's about bread. It's about bread and Jesus.

A little thing about bread. One of those little-known facts. The Egyptians invented bread 10,000 years ago.

[1:04] And it seems to have caught on. Have you noticed? The Bible has much about bread and Jesus. Where was Jesus born?

Bethlehem. Beth, house, lahem, bread. He was born in the house of bread. It's about bread.

What did Satan say to Jesus? Turn these stones into bread. Could Jesus have done that? Yeah, he's demonstrated he could turn stones into bread.

He could have formed an earthly utopia. Providing physical bread for the world forever. I wonder why he didn't do that.

Must be more to this. And so he replied to Satan, Man shall not live by bread alone. Maybe it's not just all about bread.

[2:14] What did Jesus say? Give us this day our daily bread. Now I'm going to tell you the old, old joke.

Pretend you've never heard it before. The people from KFC went to see the Pope. And they said, Here's a million dollars. Change the Lord's Prayer to Give us this day our daily chicken.

And the Pope said, That's the craziest thing I've ever heard. Jesus didn't say, Give us this day our daily chicken. He said, Give us this day our daily bread. They put a check for a billion dollars in front of them.

They said, Don't you think, In today's world, Where a lot of people are not eating bread, We should talk about chicken. The Pope looked at the check and said, I think you're absolutely right.

So he called a meeting of the College of Cardinals. He said, I've got a new teaching. Ex cathedra. The Lord's Prayer is actually wrong.

[3:15] From now on we're going to say, Give us this day our daily chicken. And they all looked. Well they said, What's the downside?

And the Pope said, Well the downside is, I think we're going to lose the wonder bread account. Oh. Maybe it's all about chicken.

But I couldn't find a chicken yesterday. I could find bread. And then Jesus took bread, Blessed it, Broke it, And gave it, Saying, This is my body.

In the Bible, Jesus and bread, Are linked. So keeping that in mind, Let's look at today's gospel lesson. The bread of life.

John chapter 6. And we'll do this line by line. Starting at verse 24. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, Nor his disciples, They themselves got into the boat, And went to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

[4:24] Here we go with the context for this passage. The context is, The day before, Jesus was out in the field teaching, And in the evening, Before dark, He had five loaves, And two fish.

Remember he blessed the bread, Broke it, And gave it, And it fed 5,000 people. Well, These 5,000 people, Probably camped out, And here it is the next day, They get up, And somebody says, I'm kind of hungry.

I could use some bread. And someone said, Where's the bread guy? He gave us bread yesterday, Maybe he'll give us bread today. They looked around, They couldn't find him.

He was gone. The boats that he brought over were gone. And they said, You know what? His headquarters is in Capernaum. Let's go. So they rented out a lot of boats, They went to the other part of the lake, And they got to Capernaum.

Then verse 25, When they found him on the other side of the sea, They said to him, Rabbi, When did you come here? Well, guess what? It's not about when Rabbi came here.

[5:31] It's a way of opening a conversation. Often we will open a conversation That has nothing to do with what we really want to talk about. It's sometimes called the presenting issue.

The presenting issue was, When did you get here? The real issue, Jesus knew. And so in verse 26, He answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, You are seeking me, Not because you saw signs, But because you ate your full of the loaves.

Sometimes Jesus confronts us, Doesn't He? With motives that may not be the best. And He did that with these, With the crowd.

We don't know how many came across the lake. It probably wasn't 5,000 by this time. And the scripture doesn't say it was 5,000. We don't know how many there were, But He saw what they were trying to do.

They wanted material comfort. And He let them know that was the wrong way. What does He say in verse 27? Do not labor for the food that perishes, But for the food that endures to eternal life, Which the Son of Man will give to you, For on Him God the Father has set His seal.

[6:49] Here's more of the confrontation. He says to the crowd, You're looking at this for material gain. The Father has something better than material gain, And it's in the Messiah, Which happens to be me.

20 mule team Borax, remember? Boom! On TV. Jim and I remember that. Nobody else remembers that. But anyway, that was an advertisement. The seal. And a king used to put a seal on his letter. We put seals on certificates when people are consecrated a bishop. Seal means we approve. So Jesus is saying to them, The Father has put the seal on me.

I'll tell you where the bread is best. And then they said to Him, What must we do to be doing the works of God? They were beginning to get it.

Because He had said, Don't work for the bread. Work for God. Ah! They said, We're starting to get this. It's got to do with God, Not bread.

[8:03] And so He answered them, Well, this is the work of God, That you believe in Him who He has sent. Now, This brings about an argument.

Do we work for God by just believing in Him? Do we just...

Is that our work? Just to believe in Jesus? That's kind of what Jesus is saying. This is the work of God, That you believe in Him whom He has sent. Does that mean we don't have to do any works of kindness, of goodness?

Just believe? You see, Sometimes we take phrases and we build a whole theology out of them.

Jesus was telling them what they needed to hear.

It's not about material gain. It's about believing. Your work is to believe. Now, from that belief, Everything else flows. Care for others.

[9:04] Our mission to the world. So, they said to Him, Verse 30, Then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?

Hello? What did He do the day before? He turned five loaves and two fish into a meal for 5,000.

What kind of work do they want to see?

What sign? He touched people and they got healed. Not too bad. But they're now moving back into the material, aren't they? They started to head toward the spiritual.

They moved back in the material. It's sort of the story of our lives. It's the story of our lives. Then they add on, Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness.

As it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Material. God gave manna. People could live physically in the desert.

[10:06] Well, Jesus, You going to give us some bread or not? We came here to get some bread.

Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you. When He says truly, truly, That means, Punctuation mark, Exclamation.

Listen. Truly, truly, I say to you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread from heaven, So they thought Moses did it. It was the Father who gave them bread they needed in the desert.

But, I've got something better for you. The Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

Oh, that's the Messiah. They got that figured out. They said, Sir, give us this bread always. They're beginning to get it again.

And finally, Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger.

Whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

[11:14] That's addressed to Holy Trinity Church, Syracuse, New York. And Caleb in the past has taught us, When Jesus says, I am, That goes back to Moses when he said, When he talked to God at the burning bush, And God said, You're going to do this.

You're going back to your people. And Moses said, Well, when I go back to my people, Who shall I say sent me? And God said, Tell them I am sent you.

Or words to that effect. And so, Jesus is claiming His rightful position as God in the flesh. I am the bread of life.

And so, We look at that scripture, And we move with it, By asking, How do we apply this to our daily bread?

No. Our daily, No. Our daily life. How do we apply this to our daily life? What does it mean? So we need to, We need to drill down a little bit.

[12:19] Now, You remember the Old Testament lesson that was just read? It had to do with manna. Did you catch the people there in the wilderness?

They began to groan about being hungry. And they thought back, And they just romanticized their past as slaves.

They said, Well, you know, Back there in Egypt, We had lots of onions and leeks. It was really good stuff. And God's killing us here. Okay.

Apparently, They preferred an opulent slavery, To a simple freedom. How about you? Would you rather have material abundance, Or spiritual satisfaction?

As someone said to me, I'll take both. However, I have found in the past, If you go for a material indulgence, As an objective in your life, While trying to have spiritual satisfaction, Guess which is going to win?

[13:38] Jesus said, It's harder for a rich man to get to salvation, Than it is for a camel to get through the eye of a needle. Doesn't mean you shouldn't be rich.

But it means we turn everything to God. I had a friend who became rich, While claiming to have spiritual satisfaction. But as he became richer and richer, His goals changed.

His percentage of giving actually went down. Where are we? There must be something deeper to real life, Than material abundance.

Now listen to this formula. Manna, Was tied to holy communion, In the early church, Which was tied to the bread of life, Jesus.

Somehow, According to the Holy Spirit, Through Jesus at the Last Supper, The early Christians, Identified, Manna from the wilderness, With bread in the Holy Communion, With Jesus as the bread of life.

[14:57] In the wilderness, The people saw this, Substance come down from heaven. And what did they say? What is it?

Do you know what manna means in Hebrew? What is it? That's what it means. So they ate what is it, For 40 years. They didn't know what it was.

Now, Look at holy communion today. What do we say? What is it? Some say, It's transformation.

The whole thing changes, From bread to, The body of Christ.

It's no longer bread. Some say, Well, Maybe it's both. And some say, You know what? It's just something we do to remember, What Jesus said at the Lord's Supper. We don't know what communion is.

What is it? And then Jesus, The bread of life. What is he? Some Christians, Believe he's just a wonderful guy.

[15:59] And his life got over and he died. Some believe that he was a prophet. And some believe he was God in the flesh. What is he?

All these questions pop up. And now, As liturgical Christians, We begin to look at holy communion. How is Jesus tied into your holy communion?

Does something happen when you come up and get a little piece of tasteless bread and throw back a little swallow of wine? Does something happen?

In your heart? I have to school myself on this when I receive communion, Or it can become just another thing I do. So I have some words I like to say.

Lord Jesus, As this bread and wine nourishes my physical body, Please, With your body and blood, Nourish my soul. If we don't see this, We miss the whole thing.

[17 : 06] Jesus wants to feed us, And it's a solemn feeding. The bread of life. Jesus coming into our heart in a tangible way.

As we recognize him spiritually. How does Jesus feed you? I know he feeds you in the holy communion. But does he feed you every day with manna?

How about scripture each day? How about praying, Listening and speaking to him every day? How about being in a group?

You know, It's long been my contention that every Christian ought to be in a small group. You miss it if you're not. And we have some very nice small groups in this church.

Get involved in a small group. One of them just happened a few minutes ago in Sunday school, didn't it? And then there are evening and afternoon activities. How does Jesus feed you?

[18 : 11] And how do you then feed others? We get to the end of this sermon, And I'm thinking of Vacation Bible School, Which is starting tomorrow. Big team effort.

Kids coming. In a sense, what we're doing is we're inviting Jesus to feed these children. And as that happens, he's going to feed us as well.

What happens when we go down to the Salvation Army on Saturday mornings to pray for people? What does it say on the car?

The big sign? How may we pray for you? Are we feeding people? Yes. Jesus is working through our feeding that we might feed others.

Punch line. Punch line. Punch line. Jesus is your bread of life. And he's more beautiful than this beautiful loaf, Which will be downstairs after church for each of us to enjoy.

[19 : 15] Jesus is your bread of life. He wants to feed you today. Spiritually. At communion.

A tangible way of receiving his nourishment for your ministry. Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, you are the bread of life.

It amazes us that you would feed us. We are like baby chicks opening our mouths to receive you. We receive you into our hearts.

Amen. Someone needs to turn that off because I don't know how to. Amen.