

Food That Truly Satisfies

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Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise. We're going to sing in Psalm 34, in the Scottish Psalter version, Psalm 34, verse 1-7.

Our first two singings are from this psalm, Psalm 34, Scottish Psalter, verse 246 of the psalm book. We sing from verse 1-7. God, will I bless all times, his praise, my mouth shall still express, my soul shall boast in God, the meek shall hear with joyfulness.

The tune is St. Thomas, and we stand to sing to God's praise. Thy soul shall boast in God, the meek shall hear with joyfulness.

Exult the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord because of her, and did me from all fears given.

[1 : 44] He looked to him unlightened with no shame in where there is, His name is St. Thomas, and we stand to sing to God's praise.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we come to worship you this day, to praise you as one who is worthy of it.

We thank you, Lord, that you promise to meet us as we come, that you promise to be with us, that you speak to us through your word. Even these words that we have sung together, they remind us of the great wonder of your saving power, that we as poor men and women, poor children, we are just poor people in this world, and yet we can cry out to you as the one who is able to save.

And we thank you, Lord, for every answered prayer that you give to us, that you are one who is faithful, that you are one who is true to your promises.

[3 : 49] And so, Lord, as we do indeed come to the end of a year, and as we look back, reflecting on so much in the past, we thank you for your great faithfulness to us, young and old alike, for your goodness to us in the praising of your name, in our worship of you in the church here, and also in Sunday school and Bible class and creche and tweenies.

We do thank you for your word and how blessed we are by it, how our lives are enriched through it, and how as we look ahead to a new year, God willing, that it is your word that is able to lead us and guide us.

And we thank you, Lord, that we do have that promise, that you go before us in all things. We do ask your blessing on us as a people, on all our families this time of holiday, Lord.

We thank you when families are able to be joined together in fellowship around your word, in meals at home, in times of just being together over a period of holiday.

But may we always remember, Lord, that this is a time when we are to remember you and your great remembrance to us, that you gave your son to us, as a people, a poor people.

[5 : 01] We thank you for the one who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. And so may our focus be on Jesus today and always. May we be ever thankful for him and for all that he has done for us, all he is doing, and all that he will do.

And may we praise you for all of your goodness to us. Hear our prayers, Lord. Continue with us throughout this day and into the week ahead, Lord. Lord, go before us, pardoning all our sin.

That's all we ask. We ask in Jesus' precious name. Amen. It's good to see young ones in our midst today.

It's always nice to be together, especially as we think of coming to the end of a year and into a new year, God willing. We have so much to give thanks for.

And I hope during this week you've had so much to give thanks for. I'm sure you all got many different presents, so you've got much to give thanks for in that. But above all, we give thanks to God for his goodness to us.

[6 : 02] Now, hands up. Who ate too much chocolate this week? I'm sure most have. There's lots of people who aren't telling the truth in here today, I can tell you. There's not many hands going up.

I'm sure we've all overindulged a little. And what I have to show you here, I'm sure you don't want to see any more of this, do you? It's not an advent calendar. They're probably long gone.

It's a box of chocolates. Box of chocolates. And there's lots of nice chocolates inside. And the amazing thing about this box of chocolates is it's not open. It's probably the only one left in the house that isn't opened.

Because there's a time of year when you just open a box of chocolates and you start just picking them out one by one. But how do you open a box of chocolates? What do you do when you open a box of chocolates?

There's certain ways that we can be when we open a box of chocolates. Different ways that we can do it. We can be very selfish. We can open the box for ourselves first.

[7 : 00] And we look at the list of the chocolates on the back and think, right, I'm going to get the caramel one. Because that's my favorite. Nobody else is going to get that. So you go into the box, you get the one you like yourself, you take them away and then you pass it around.

Is that the nice way to be with a box of chocolates? No. Others can come to a box of chocolates and not think, which one's my favorite? Just grab anything and everything.

Just try anything. And then you put something like a Turkish delight in your mouth. You think, oh, I don't like that. So you spit it out and then go on to the next one. And then you just keep going, keep going, keep going until you get ones you like yourself.

Is that the way we should be? That's being quite selfish as well, isn't it? Instead, we should maybe look around us and think, well, who would like a chocolate first? Isn't that the nice way to do it?

And then you look on the back and you take your time and study the box and say to people, well, this is what we have. What do you like? And I like this when you start to share them around and you get the best out of the box of chocolates by shading and by looking and seeing and taking your time as to what's in the box.

[8 : 11] And it reminds us when we think of how we are with Jesus. Sometimes with Jesus, we just say, Jesus, I want this. This is my favorite thing in all the world and I want you to give it to me and I want it now.

So we can be selfish towards Jesus. Other times, we just come to Jesus and say, I want everything. I want it all. I want it all myself. And that's not the right way to come to Jesus either.

What we want to do is come to Jesus together as a people together and say, well, Lord, what do you want for us? What's your will for us? Let's look at your word.

Let's look at, is it where the box of chocolates and see all the different things that's there for us and think, Lord, maybe I'll be good at that and somebody else will be good at this and somebody else can do that part and think, how can we be like a selection box of chocolates together where everybody has a part to play?

Everybody has something to do in the life of the church. We don't want to be selfish. We don't want to have it all for ourselves. We want to be sharing in it all together and enjoying the favor of God upon us.

[9 : 23] So as we come to the end of this year and God willing go into a new year, may we do so together, praying for one another, encouraging one another, praying that we would see God's blessing and goodness as we share in his work and in his ministry together.

God has been good to us. He has given us many gifts and we pray going forward to know the Lord's blessing and his goodness with us. We're going to say the Lord's prayer together now. Amen. Amen. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. We carry on singing in that psalm that we had before, Psalm 34.

[10 : 30] We're going to sing from verse 8 to verse 15. Psalm 34, page 247. O taste and see that God is good who trusts and him is blessed.

Fear God, his saints, none that in fear shall be with want. O press. We'll sing from verse 8 to 15 and the tuner's wheelchair. We stand to sing to God's praise.

O taste and see that God is good, who trusts and the John's the lions young may hungry be, and they may lack their food, but they that truly seek the Lord shall not lack any good.

O children, ever do we come and unto me give it, I shall you teach to understand how the Lord should fill.

What man is he that life is high, to see good good love, thy lips refrain from speaking guile, and from their words done.

[13:05] Depart from do you seek peace, seek peace, pursue it the earnest thee, God's eyes and on the just is here shall open to their cry.

I Well, we're going to turn to read together in God's Word in the Gospel of John, reading in chapter 6.

We take up our reading at verse 25, reading down to verse 51. John chapter 6, we find it around page 1075 in the Bibles, if you're using the church Bibles, and take up our reading at verse 25, where we find at the beginning of the chapter Jesus has fed the 5,000 in that miraculous way, and there was so much left over as well. And then in the evening he came to walk on water, another miracle of Jesus.

And then we find the people gathered round with him as he comes to teach them here in verse 25. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures.

Do not labor 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.

[15:09] Then they said to him, What must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

So they said to him, Then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. As it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my 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.

They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

[16:25] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

So the Jews grumbled about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven.

They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Then Jesus answered them, Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.

It is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God.

[17:36] He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. Let's again just bow our heads in a word of prayer.

Let us pray. Amen. Lord, our gracious God, we continue in dependence upon you for all things.

Thankful for the bread of life that you are to us. The one who sustains us. The one who keeps us.

The one who, even in these words that we have read, you have given us so many promises there.

[18 : 44] And we thank you that through faith we receive these promises, that they are promises that are to your people of old and to your people today and to people to come in generations before us, Lord, however many they may be before your return.

We thank you that your word is faithful, that your word is true, that your word, although it has been put down and cast aside down through all the generations, even as we see in the reading before us, the Jews who grumbled about Jesus because they saw him as one who was just born in this world, a son to Joseph as it's described.

And yet we read that you are the one, that you have given the one who was sent from heaven, that you sent your son into this world. And we thank you for the wonder of that. We thank you for the reason for it, that we see here that he came, that we might have life through him and life eternal. And as we come here before you today on the last Lord's Day of this year, we thank you for the life that you have given to us. We thank you for those who believe in you and to know the promise of eternal life.

And we do pray, Lord, for your spirit to minister to all who are still seeking after that eternal life, who are longing for it, maybe even today, to know that great assurance, that great comfort of what faith in Christ brings.

[20 : 15] And we pray, Lord, for your spirit to work, that as we look back with thankfulness, we may look forward, Lord, in dependence and faith on you, all of us together.

And we do look back on this year, Lord, thankful for all that you have done for us, thankful for the times of joy that you have been with us in, and thankful too for the difficult times when we have known your presence as well.

When we think of our congregation and our people and even our community, we are so mindful of all that takes place in the lives of many around us. We know that even throughout this year we have times of rejoicing in births, in babies being born, even into our own congregation here.

And we thank you for new life in that way. We thank you for services of baptism too and for families rejoicing around that. And we do give thanks, Lord, for all our young people and pray that you will bless them, each one, and that you will keep them, your covenant children, those who have been baptized in this congregation, maybe even over many years.

We thank you, Lord, for your promises in that. And we do pray, Lord, that these promises may be fulfilled in your time. We thank you too for marriage and the gift that that is.

[21 : 34] We thank you for marriages that took place, belonging to ourselves as a congregation as well. We do pray blessing on all married couples and families and just ask your blessing and protection over homes and families together.

We thank you, Lord, of the pain of grief as well, as we know it so often in our experience in life. And this past year, and as we reflect on it, Lord, we know many who have gone through that pain of loss and the grief that that brings, not just for a short time, but maybe even for a lifetime.

We know, Lord, that pain is real for so many. And this time of year maybe just brings that pain even more. We do pray and thank you for the comfort that you are, the comfort that you give, the comfort that is only found in you.

And we do thank you, Lord, that you are that constant companion, the one who keeps your people. We thank you too, Lord, at times when we may be troubled by many different things, people who are in ill health.

We pray for them, Lord. We ask your blessing and peace over those who may be in hospital or homes or confined to their own homes. We know, Lord, the uncertainty of life in so many ways and how quickly circumstances can change.

[22 : 57] But we thank you for you as the one who changes not. And we do pray, Lord, for grace and help in our times of need. We pray for our whole communities, Lord, at this time when there can be so many anxieties looking ahead to a new year, uncertainties in the workplace, uncertainties in the home, uncertainties in the world that surrounds us.

We see so many things that may leave us anxious or afraid when we think of the troubles of this world, when we think of the economy, when we think of debt, when we think of unemployment in our own nation.

We see the troubles and concerns that that brings, Lord. And we just pray for you to bless our land, to bless our people, to bless those who rule over us with your wisdom from on high.

That we would look to you as a people, that we would turn once more to you, pleading for marshy, pleading for your help. We think of the world, O Lord, with its troubles too and conflicts taking place, times of great need in so many different parts of our world.

We think of your people who are persecuted. When we think of the things that we see on our screens and hear so much of in the news, and yet so much is hidden from us as well.

[24 : 15] So much that goes on without anyone knowing, as it were, but yet you, Lord, know. You know those who are persecuted. You know those who suffer. You know those in need.

And we do pray, Lord, for your mercy and your grace over us. We pray for your word to go out with power to all ends of the earth, for it is a saving word, it's a powerful word, a transforming word.

And we pray that for all your organizations, for all your missionaries, for all who endeavor to reach out with the good news of Jesus Christ, that you would bless and uphold all.

We think especially of Muriel, thankful for her ministry in Cambodia, thankful for her fellowship with us, thankful for that bond and connection that is so powerful. And we thank you, Lord, that you are with her.

And we do pray that you will continue to keep her, to uphold her, and to bless her. We thank you for one another, Lord. We thank you for the encouragements that we receive together as a people.

[25 : 14] And we pray your favor upon us as a congregation going into this year ahead, God willing, that you would provide for us, Lord, in a time of vacancy, that you would provide for us in every way as we long to see your powerful work in our midst, as we long to see souls coming to be saved, as we long to see believers being built up, as we long to see your word being blessed to us all.

We thank you, Lord, for your promises in it, that you will build your church. And that is our hope, even here today, Lord, that together we would know the foundation of your church, that is Christ Jesus, our Lord, our cornerstone, that we would look to him, that you would help us to have our eyes fixed on him, and that you would go before us, Lord, as we pray your goodness and mercy to follow us all the days of our lives.

So, Lord, be with us now. Bless your word as we sing from it, as we open it up together. May it all be to your glory, and may we know the power of your spirit in our midst, as we ask all the forgiveness of our sin.

In Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing together to God's praise in Psalm 63. In the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 63, page 80 of the psalm books.

We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 8. O God, you are my God alone. I seek your face with eagerness. My soul and body thirst for you in this dry, weary wilderness.

[26 : 54] There's a longing for the Lord, and that's what we seek to have as we come to the end of a year and go into a new year, God willing, that we would have that longing and thirst for the Lord.

We'll sing verse 1 to 8, the Tunis Finart, and we stand to sing to God's praise. Amen. O God, you are my God alone.

I seek your face with eagerness. My soul and body thirst for you, and this dry, weary wilderness. I seek your face with eagerness. I seek your face with eagerness. Your power and glory held my days.

For better is your love that life, It is your love that lies, and so my lips will sing your face.

[28 : 16] I'll bless you, Lord, throughout my life, and raise my hands to you and live.

My joyful lips will sing your praise, my soul is fed with precious hair.

Upon my bed I lie awake, and in my thoughts remember you.

I meditate throughout the night, and keep your constant love in you.

Because you are my help alone, in shadow of your wings I'll sing.

[29 : 38] You hold me up with your right hand, to you, O God, my soul and King.

We can turn back to our reading in John chapter 6. We'll read again at verse 33. John 6, verse 33.

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. And so on.

We're going to consider the whole of what we read together this morning from verse 25 down to verse 51.

But our focus is on these verses in particular where Jesus is talking there about being the bread of life. I'm sure you're only too aware of how important food is in our lives in a week where we so often

overindulge, and maybe looking ahead to another week of overindulging once again.

[31 : 03] We can't do without food, and yet there's some times when we just think, oh, I've had enough of it. Christmas Day, I'm sure, is a day when you think to yourself, I never want to see another plate of food again.

And yet the next day you're looking for something because you're starting to feel peckish once again. Our thoughts, our lives are so often taken up with food.

We think about it so much, whether it's thinking of what we're going to have, preparing food, eating food together, clearing up afterwards. It occupies so much of our lives.

What's your favorite food? What's your favorite meal of the day? So where are your thoughts now? You're drifting off somewhere to think maybe in what's for dinner today, what you've eaten in this past week.

Food just has that kind of pull on us. Well, come back here. Don't drift off into thinking about what's for dinner. Don't drift off into thinking what's your favorite meal, but come back and think of what we're looking at here today.

[32 : 12] And let's focus on the Word of God. What is our bread, our sustenance, our food to keep us going on a daily basis? How much of our thoughts are focused on the Word of God on a daily basis?

Do we give what we eat as much thought as we give to the Word of God? It's a food of a different kind, and yet it's a food that fully satisfies us.

And that's the point that Jesus is making here as he ministers to this crowd, as he speaks to them about the fact that he is the bread of life.

They've been fascinated by what's happened at the beginning of this chapter, when they've seen and heard of him feeding the great crowd of 5,000. They've been amazed by what's taken place there.

But they're seeing now that Jesus is there with them. And does he have the same pull on them? Does Jesus have the same pull on your lives and your thoughts as food does?

[33 : 19] For the people of Jesus' day, food was important, just as it is to our own day. They went hungry, and they sat down, and they ate.

And they had just seen this great feeding of the 5,000. But in verse 26 and 27, Jesus gives them a challenge in the midst of all that they've seen.

Jesus challenges them there when he says to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

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.

So there is this challenge to them. What are you looking for in this life? What is your focus on? What are your thoughts consumed by?

[34 : 19] What's vital for your salvation? It's not the food that you eat on a daily basis that will leave you hungry again, but the food that satisfies eternally.

And that's the challenge that Jesus is giving them here. Bread will still leave you hungry. But as Jesus says in verse 35, I am the bread of life.

I am the one who will keep you, the one who will sustain you. And so today as we come to the end of a year, as we look back and reflect on what's past, and as we look ahead to what's before us, what are you hungry for?

What are you doing as you go into a new year? What is your life like? How are you living it? And what is your focus on? Are you fully satisfied in every way?

Or is there something lacking? Is there something that's leaving you hungry? And you know that there's something missing, something that you need that will fully satisfy you.

[35 : 35] Well, that's the challenge that Jesus gives to us here in this passage. And he gives us a focus for us as we think of coming to the end of a year and going into a new year.

How are we living our lives? And there are three ways I want us to think about our lives here today. And think about how we're living and how we're going to go forward and what we need.

And the three things are this. We see different kinds of people here in this passage. We see a people who are laboring, first of all. A people who are laboring.

Secondly, we see a people who are longing. And then thirdly, we see a people who are living. What kind of person are you today when it comes to these?

Are you laboring today? Are you longing? Or are you truly living today? I want us to see these three groups.

[36 : 38] And begin with a people who are laboring. What is it that you're laboring for today? In the same way that food so often takes up our thoughts, so does our lives and how we are living them in the sense of laboring.

Jesus here speaks about laboring in this way. He says in verse 27, Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life.

He's talking there about people who are working, who are laboring in that sense. They're working in their lives, and they're working to provide for themselves. And you may be laboring yourself.

You may be working a way in your life to provide in so many different ways, for yourself or for others. We're all in that sense laboring in this world.

But does our labor even have a focus? Does our work have a focus? And what is the focus of it? What we see here is Jesus telling us that there are people who are laboring with a wrong focus.

[37 : 50] As it says in verse 27, Do not labor for food that perishes. Do not just work for that that perishes, that disappears, that's here one minute and gone the next.

And that is the way that we can so often live our lives. With that sense of just laboring away for something that is but for a moment. Something that doesn't last.

And we can see it in our own lives in so many different ways. And these aren't all things that are wrong. But they're wrong when we don't have things in perspective.

When all that we're thinking about, all that we're consumed with, is laboring, is working for the next holiday, for the next reward, to buy something nice. When we're living our lives in that way, just going at it, working away, slaving away, just so we can have something at the end of it.

But that something is then gone. And then we move on to the next phase, looking forward to the next holiday. The way we are there is almost something that just takes all our focus, all our attention, but something that will not satisfy fully and something that will not last.

[39 : 10] And that's what Jesus is highlighting here in verse 27. Do not labor for that food that perishes, that just disappears. But, he says, but for the food that endures to eternal life.

Are you laboring in life and not satisfied? There are so many people in this world who are just like that.

And it can surprise you sometimes that it's sometimes people who have everything, and yet they're still laboring in that sense for things that are just perishing, that are disappearing.

There's a big American sports star. He's now retired, but his career was full of success. An American footballer by the name Tom Brady. His career spanned a long time.

He became the most successful American footballer of all time, winning seven Super Bowls, as it's called. That's the major competition in American football.

[40 : 16] It's like our European Cup, you could say. It's a big title. Brings with it all kinds of glory. But during his career, maybe about halfway through his career, he was interviewed.

And he was being asked a number of different questions. At this point, he'd had a successful career. He'd won three Super Bowls. And he said this, why having won three Super Bowls, do I still think there's something greater out there for me?

I think it's got to be more than this, he said. I mean, this isn't it. This can't be what it's all cracked up to be. This is him in the midst of his success, saying it can't be just this.

And the interviewer asked him, what's the answer? And Tom Brady's response was, I wish I knew. A successful career.

So much money in his life. Everything that he could ask for. And yet he's still looking for an answer. He's laboring for things that are perishing. And he's saying, I wish I knew.

[41 : 29] I wish I knew what it was about. And it's such a common story. Laboring away in life, even successful lives, hungry for something, but with no real direction.

Lacking that thing that will satisfy. And there's no fulfillment. Is that you today? As you think of your life, looking back and where you are at the end of this year, is that you today?

Are you laboring away, but still thinking, I wish I knew what the answer was? You're still thinking that there's something missing.

Well, Jesus is showing us here just what is missing. It is him. It is him that is missing.

When we are laboring without any satisfaction, without any fulfillment, when we know there's still something missing, it is him. Because he says to us, you are seeking me, not because you saw

signs, but because you ate your fill of loaves.

[42 : 38] They were looking for something, but not the right thing in verse 26. So he says, do not labor for food that perishes, but the food that endures to eternal life.

He is the answer. And the I am sayings that we find in the New Testament, they so often take us right back to the Old Testament, to what the people here would have been very familiar with.

It takes us back to the book of Isaiah, and Isaiah chapter 55. In that wonderful passage, it says, why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?

And why do you labor for that which does not satisfy? Isaiah had said it all these years before, and Jesus is just highlighting it again.

It's the ongoing problem in so many people's lives. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And why do you labor for that which does not satisfy?

[43 : 33] It's just what Jesus is saying here. Why are you laboring in life? Jesus is exposing the heart here. He is exposing all that is wrong with us, all that is taking up our attention for the wrong reasons, because they are things that will ultimately perish, and our attention is taken away from what will give us life.

We have here a people who are laboring, a people who are looking and not seeing just what they need.

They're not realizing what it is that is missing. Do you see these words as a challenge yourself today? Is this your life?

You are laboring for what perishes. Well, let us think secondly about a people who are longing. A people who are longing.

What do you want from Jesus? That's what Jesus is asking here of the crowd. What do you want of me? Why do you listen to his word?

[44 : 50] Why do you come and hear what he is saying? Why do you seek after him? Because we all know that there is something missing in our lives. Tom Brady knew it.

He just couldn't see the answer. And the people here, they know it. They're looking for something. Why do you labor for what perishes?

He's saying he's seeing them, living their lives but not focused on the right things, longing for fulfillment but not able to get it. And so we see here a people who are longing.

In verse 28 to 34, we see different ways the people are longing. Longing for a number of different things. You see them longing to please God in some way.

You see them longing to be able to do something. In verse 28 to say, What must we be doing? What must we do to be doing the works of God?

[45 : 51] There's a longing here for something. What can we do to please God? And that's often our longing as well. We want to please God.

But how do we go about it? They're looking for a sign so that they could believe. Again, this is a recurring theme. You see throughout the scriptures, people looking for a sign.

And if we have a sign, then I will believe in Jesus. This is longing for something to show them. You see it here that they have a longing for the past.

How our fathers, it says in verse 31, ate the manna in the wilderness. They're looking back to the days of Moses and there's this longing to those days again.

There's a longing there for something that's missing. The bread that Jesus speaks of. There's a longing for that as well.

[46 : 49] In verse 34, the end of verse 34, Sir, give us this bread always. There's a real sense of longing here.

And yet they're still not satisfied. Because their eyes are focused on the wrong thing. Their eyes are looking in the wrong place.

He's kind of speaking here about what is our diet. How are we living our lives? We don't want to hear the word diet just now. But it's something that Jesus is here speaking about.

It's how they're seeking to satisfy themselves. And it's almost like they're being pulled in different directions all the time. And that's the way we are when it comes to diets as well.

We try it for a time and then we change. Or we get told advice and then that advice changes. We're told one day chocolate is bad for us.

[47 : 51] We're told another day, well, it's not that bad. We're told to avoid dairy products one day and then the next day. Dairy products are actually quite good for us. We're told to avoid fats and

then we're told there's actually fats that are good for us.

And it's all so confusing. And that's just the way it can seem for us in life as well when it comes to faith. We're just confused by it all.

We're hearing maybe so many different things. But Jesus is saying here, just like a bad diet can affect you in different ways, how it can affect you not just outwardly but inwardly, a bad diet can harm your insides, it can affect your heart and all kinds of things.

And that's why we see a concern from the health service, from a doctor to say to change your diet. Well, Jesus is here showing a great concern for the people too, that they would change their ways, that they would look on the problem here and see a solution, that they're longing for so much that's being in different places, in different ways, trying to please different people or different gods or different religions, pulled in different directions.

Jesus is showing them that their longing should be focused, that their longing should be focused on him. for he says in verse 35, I am the bread of life.

[49 : 31] He says, when they say, sir, give us this bread always, he says, I am the bread. This is where you are to focus. I am the one that you are to focus on.

I am the one who will satisfy your longing. I am the one who will fulfill it all. If you have a dog and there's food on the go, you often find that the dog is suddenly right by your side, looking up to you with that sense of longing for something that you are working on.

For our dog, it's the sound of cheese being opened. As soon as he hears that noise, all of a sudden he's right beside you, looking up, wanting cheese. Martin Luther, the reformer, he learned a lesson from a dog.

He spoke of it in this way. He said, oh, if only I could pray the way that the dog watches the meat. All his thoughts are concentrated on that piece of meat.

He has no other thought, wish, or hope. There's that longing, and there's that focus. Well, when Jesus says, I am the bread of life, does that catch your attention?

[50 : 51] Does that capture every thought? When everything else that you see around you, that you've been laboring for, and perishes, or disappears, and you hear, I am the bread of life, does that not catch your attention?

and make you see Jesus? He is the one I should be longing for. Are you asking that question?

Am I longing for him as I should? You're laboring, you're longing, but is your focus on Christ?

Well, the last thing we see here is a people who are living. A people who are living. Every response that Jesus gives here, it has behind it that sense of eternal life.

As he responds there, in verse 27, do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life.

[51 : 59] As he speaks there, in verse 35, I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Behind that is eternal life. Do you believe every meal that you eat each day keeps you alive?

Is that why you eat your food each day? To enjoy it, yes, but to know that without it you perish. You eat your food because you know it keeps you.

You come to that conclusion. You don't say, I don't need food to live. I don't need food to carry on.

I can do without it. Because you can't. But do you say the same about Jesus? Do you say the same about him?

[52 : 56] I can live without him. I can survive apart from him. You can't. Because, as he says here, I am the bread of life.

I am the one who gives life. The attitude of some here was, we don't need him. Who is this? Who does he think he is?

In verse 41, the Jews grumbled about him because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph?

Just an ordinary being. And yet, it was the son of God. The giver of life. The giver of life eternal.

The bread of this world which we labor for, which often seems to have so much to offer us, it perishes. It never satisfies. But the bread that Jesus offers is a bread that is eternal.

[54 : 05] In Greek mythology, there was a king called King Tantalus. And he was punished. And his punishment was to be chained in a lake.

And the lake was water and he was becoming thirsty. And the water was up to his chin. But every time he bent down, the water would recede away. He just couldn't reach it.

And above him was a tree with branches dropping down, full of fruit. And every time he tried to reach up to the branch, the branch would rise away. He couldn't reach it. Everything was just out of reach. Everything that could satisfy him was just out of reach. And it was a symbol of utter frustration.

Everything just out of reach. And the name King Tantalus is where the English word tantalize comes from. Everything seems so tantalizing.

[55 : 04] And that's the way the world is so often. Everything looks so appealing, so attractive. And yet full satisfaction is just out of our reach. I wish I knew what Tom Brady said.

We can look to God's word and hear, see the answers. The guarantees in life. What is secure what is sure is found in the one who says, I am the bread of life.

In him is life. There's so much that we do not know in this life. There's so much I can't guarantee you in this life. I can't guarantee what 2025 is going to be like.

I don't know what's going to happen in our nation or in this world as we go into a new year. I don't know what will happen in your life and my life going into a new year.

There's so much that is uncertain. But I do know what the word of God says. And that is that if we are to live, we only live in him.

[56 : 19] And it says as we come to him, we have life. And you have so many of these promises, even in these verses that we've read. In verse 37 it says, All that the Father gives to me will come to me.

And whoever comes to me I will never cast out. There is a security. There is a promise. All who come to me I will never cast out.

You're afraid to come because you're not good enough. You're afraid to come because he'll see you as you are and say, go away. But he says, If you come I will never cast you out.

In verse 40 he says, For this is the will of my Father that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in me should have, believes in him, should have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day.

There is a promise. There is a guarantee. In verse 47 and 48, Truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life, I am the bread of life.

[57 : 26] Whoever believes, there is life in him. And in order to enjoy this life you must receive it.

You must believe in him. You can believe in Jesus that he was a real man. You can believe that he died on the cross.

You can believe that he rose from the grave. But do you believe it was for you? Do you believe in him who is the bread of life?

We've all, I'm sure, sat round tables this week where food has been put in front of us. But what's your attitude when it comes to that food?

Do you sit there waiting to be served? Do you sit there waiting for someone to do everything for you? To put it all on the plate, prepare it for you?

[58 : 25] You may do. Or you may dive in and help yourself. But there's one thing you've got to do yourself. To enjoy that food you have to pick it up and put it in your mouth and eat it.

No one else can do it for you. And the same is true with Christ. Christ is before us. Christ is here for us.

But I can't do it for you. No one else can do it for you. You must come in faith and believe. Believe in the one who is the bread of life.

Do you love him? Do you believe in him? Then believe with all your heart that you might live.

Are you laboring today for what perishes? Well, Jesus says do not labor for what perishes but for that bread, for that life-giving bread that does not perish.

[59 : 40] are you longing today? Well, look to Jesus. Don't get distracted by everything else in this world thinking, I wish I knew what the answer was.

The answer is here. It is Jesus. Are you living today? as you come to the end of a year, are you living in him?

Thank God that he gives life and that the offer of life is before us today. Of all the foods that we may crave today, may Jesus, the bread of life, be what we crave the most and what satisfies our every longing and every desire, the longing that gives life eternal.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we do thank you for that desire that you put in our hearts to be around your word and under your word.

God, we pray that that desire would not stop there. The desire and longing of our hearts would be to truly believe in the one who is the bread of life.

[61 : 00] That our words would be, sir, give us this bread always. That as we come to the end of a year and God willing into a new one, that always our longing would be for Jesus and believing in him.

Hear our prayers, Lord, and continue with us, pardoning our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 107.

Let's sing Psalms version, Psalm 107. We'll sing the last part of the Psalm, verse 37, down to the end of the Psalm.

The tune is Martyrdom. Psalm 107, verse 37. They reaped a fruitful harvest from the vineyard and the field. He blessed and made them multiply, their herds maintained their yield.

They faced decline, their fortunes fail. They suffered great distress, brought low by him who scorns the proud. They roamed the wilderness, but he did not abandon them.

[62 : 13] There is that promise in these words, he did not abandon them. And we pray that the Lord will be with us going forward in these days so we would know his great blessing.

Psalm 107, verse 37, to the end of the Psalm, we stand to sing. They reaped a fruitful harvest from the vineyard and the field.

He blessed and made them multiply, the hearts maintained their yield.

They faced the time their fortunes fell, they suffered great distress, brought low by them who storms the pride, they roamed the wilderness.

But he did not abandon them, he brought the needy folk.

[63 : 50] From their affliction and increased their families like a flock.

the unrighteous The unrighteous and are glad, the wicked hold their peace.

Let all the wise take note and hurt the Lord's love does not cease.

After the benediction, I'll go to the main door. Now may the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Please,