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THE CHALLENGE TO THINK DIFFERENTLY (John 6:25-34)

One of our liabilities when we read the teaching of Jesus is that this world is all we have experienced. Jesus spent much of his time showing his hearers (including us) that there is a different plane than this world – other priorities, other purposes, other life-goals. In this next passage in John, Jesus continues to teach the huge crowd he just miraculously fed. But, like us, they were having a hard time understanding.

*John 6:25-34 - 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 work 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.**” 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 then 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.”*

SCOLDING ABOUT INFERIOR FOOD

After feeding the more than 5,000 people earlier in this chapter, Jesus and the disciples had left pretty abruptly. The crowd followed them across the Sea of Galilee to the little village of Capernaum. They asked him a rather simple question (“Rabbi, when did you come here?”) but as he so often did, Jesus ignores their question and moves immediately to speaking the truth they needed to hear.

He told them the only reason they were following him is because he had fed them. Then he made the important turn to the spiritual – don’t spend your life looking for the things that satisfy temporarily, but find the food that lasts forever. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus put it this way:

*Matthew 4:4 – Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on **bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.**’”*

There is a spiritual plane that transcends this temporal, physical one. It is spiritual, not physical, and it is based on what God has revealed, so we need to know well the words that he has spoken in the Scriptures. The problem with being enamored with the things in this world is that they do not ultimately satisfy. We always want more. Jesus knew that the bread he offers – a spiritual, heavenly food – can satisfy every person’s true need.

*1 Timothy 6:8-10 - But godliness with contentment is great gain... if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction... **Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.***

Generally, we humans aren’t very good at guarding against the imbalance of the temporal and the eternal. We think of eternity far too little and are not motivated by the truth of its existence. We tend to devote far more time to managing our earthly affairs than we devote to building our spiritual lives. Consequently, people can have their “house in order” while, at the same time, experience a life that is in shambles.

THE SOURCE OF THE BEST FOOD

This crowd, still stuffed from all the bread and fish, needed to hear that they will get hungry again, Why? Because earthly food, while necessary for survival, doesn't ultimately satisfy. It doesn't last and according to this text, "food that endures to eternal life, the Son of Man will give you." Christ himself is the source of this spiritual, eternal food.

We saw earlier in the book of John, that when the disciples caught up Jesus in Samaria, they asked him where he had found lunch. What he told them sounds a lot like his teaching here in John chapter six:

John 4:32, 34 - [Jesus] said, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."... "My food," Jesus said, "is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work."

Usually when Jesus is speaking about food, he is not talking about physical, earthly food.

A STATEMENT ABOUT WORKS

The crowd's next question reveals even more confusion in their minds. They asked, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus' answer to this question is profound and is completely consistent with what we find throughout the New Testament. He said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." In other words, salvation can't be earned. It is by faith. There are no works you can do to make yourself acceptable to God.

*Romans 3:28 - For we hold that **one is justified by faith** apart from works of the law.*

*Ephesians 2:8, 9 - For it is **by grace** you have been saved, **by faith** - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - **not by works**, so that no one can boast.*

THE SUPERIOR BREAD OF LIFE

The passage ends with a little history lesson as Jesus reminds the Jewish crowd that when the young nation of Israel was making the trip from Egypt to the Promised Land, they needed food to get through the desert. Two million people with just the clothes on

their backs would need fed. Who was going to provide the food? Moses? Jesus makes it clear that bread comes from God himself and he fed the Israelites with manna, as much as they needed. But while that manna took care of their temporary hunger, God also provided a superior nourishment that fully satisfies and meets our eternal need.

JESUS KNEW THAT OUR DEEPEST NEEDS WERE NOT PHYSICAL, BUT SPIRITUAL... BY FEEDING THEM BREAD HE HAD DEMONSTRATED THAT HE WAS THE NEW AND GREATER MOSES. BUT THE PHYSICAL BREAD WAS NOT IMPORTANT. WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS JESUS HIMSELF, WHO IS THE SOURCE OF ALL SPIRITUAL LIFE... JESUS COULD DO MUCH MORE THAN MULTIPLY THE BREAD. HE WAS TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF, OBVIOUSLY. HE WAS THE BREAD, THE SPIRITUAL BREAD FROM HEAVEN THAT GIVES LIFE TO THE WORLD.

Philip Ryken, Exodus: Saved For God's Glory

He didn't use this word in his encounter with this crowd, but basically Jesus was telling them that they were idolaters. Any time we replace the ways of Christ with something of lesser value (and everything else is of lesser value) we choose a priority other than God. That is the very definition of idolatry, It can be a relationship, or money, or prestige, or politics, or a profession, or education, or a thousand other things. They are earthly and won't last. Jesus' message to us today is that he is eternally satisfying and we can begin to enjoy that satisfaction now in this life. His words and acts are recorded for us. His Spirit is available to come beside us to guide us in his Word. The church is there for us to encourage each other to stay on the path of Christ's teachings. But we have to think with eternity in view.

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
(ZOOM)