

The (Ginger)Bread of Life – John 6:25-59
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We're going to read through John 6:25-59 with two questions in mind:

What are the people looking for?

What is Jesus offering them?

We don't think much about how valuable bread is. The idea of people chasing Jesus around the countryside and across bodies of water for bread is lost on us. For the most part, we live where bread is abundant. We have so much bread that during a meal you may be warned, "Don't fill up on bread!"

But bread was life for people in Jesus' day. Most of us cannot relate to their desperation for bread because we don't identify with their hunger. Being around someone that can multiply bread was a very big deal!

Jesus acknowledges their reasons for pursuing him, but he's not all that impressed.

²⁶Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷Do not work for food that spoils, but for 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."

A hungry people see hope in the provision of food. But Jesus encourages them to think bigger. Jesus encourages them to think about something more permanent. Jesus encourages them to think of something that is eternal. He leads them to go from hoping for something small and temporary to something satisfying and never ending.

Jesus tells them, "My Father . . . gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (6:32-33)

Jesus is referring to the bread, the manna, that God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness. Bread that God provided for them daily. Recognizing that Jesus is speaking of this constant source of bread, the people respond,

³⁴"Sir, always give us this bread." What Jesus is promising is even more than they were hoping for! I appreciate other English translations of this statement by the people. In the New Living Translation we read them saying, **³⁴"Sir, give us that bread every day."** In the Message we read, **³⁴"Master, give us this bread, now and forever!"**

They are hoping for provision in the form of miraculously supplied bread that comes to them every day. Jesus responds to them, but not in the way they were hoping. Jesus says:

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

They come after him looking for more bread, looking for a leader that will always provide for them. And Jesus says, "Is it bread you want? The bread is me! I am what you are truly needing."

When the people first find Jesus after the multiplying of the bread and fish, Jesus encouraged them, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life" As readers now, we recognize Jesus isn't just speaking about food. Jesus is speaking about eternal things.

But the idea of food that endures to eternal life excites them. Food that lasts forever. They are willing to do whatever it takes to find this food.

²⁸Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" They want access to this everlasting resource.

²⁹Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." The work Jesus encourages them to do is to trust. Believe in the one sent from God. Believe that he is the way to God, and in your belief act accordingly. When Jesus says, "I am the Bread of life" he is telling them that he is what will satisfy. He is telling them he is the one God the Father has sent. Trust and follow him.

Earlier in this chapter, the people were ready to crown Jesus as their ruler, as their king. If we're talking about bread, this Jesus guy is alright! But now that he is saying he's what they're really looking for, they don't think he's all that great.

³⁰So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Give us MORE proof! Give us more evidence of your credibility. Maybe . . . give us more bread? They already had the proof, but suddenly they're not convinced.

It's always easy for us to judge the people of the Bible. They are cartoonish in how quickly they change their minds. They're fickle. They go from wanting to crown him king to asking for more credentials. Asking for more proof. But I think after looking for a while, we see ourselves in these people, too.

WE ask Jesus, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?

Sure, I joyfully sing songs of Jesus' faithfulness. I believe them while I sing them. Sure, I have those one or two stories that always come to mind where God intervened in my life. Sure, I have the witness of Scripture, the witness of believers that I know, and believers throughout history following Jesus.

But when Jesus asks something of me. When Jesus asks me to do something and step out in faith. My response is, "What have you done for me lately?" What sign will you give that I may believe in you?

The people spend days in pursuit of Jesus, hoping he will solve their problems. Hunger, healing, justice – they all hope for specific solutions to specific problems. And Jesus responds to them with "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

We do the same thing. **We put our hope in specific solutions.** We hope for a certain job, a conflict resolved, a debt paid, justice served. And we ask God to give us that very specific solution. Because if God gives this specific solution, our lives will be ok.

While we are hoping for specific solutions, while we are asking for bread, **Jesus responds, “Put your hope in me.”** We say, “I really need you to do this for me, Jesus.” Jesus says, “Trust me.”

When we need God to do a specific *thing* for us, we often trust the *thing* more than we trust in God. Years ago, when I was looking for work, I was praying to God for a job. But I found myself not believing God was my solution – the job was the solution. I was trusting in a job to save me – I wasn’t trusting Jesus to save me.

We believe that very specific solutions will be the answer to our deepest felt needs. We’re looking for bread, when Jesus in front of us is announcing, “I am the Bread of Life. I am what you need.” Don’t hope in the bread – hope in the Bread of Life.

There is a common theme found throughout the Bible, and that theme is **WILDERNESS**. Something BIG happens – it could be a bad incident, it could be a liberation, it could be a new beginning. And after that first incident happens, a person or people spend very significant time in the wilderness. Some end up in the wilderness because of their bad decision; some end up in the wilderness because of someone else’s bad decisions, some end up in the wilderness as a time of preparation.

Moses kills an Egyptian and is exiled to the wilderness. The Israelites are liberated from slavery in Egypt and then wander in the wilderness. David is anointed to be the next King, but in the meantime, he spends years on the run in the wilderness. Elijah pulls off a miracle for God and hides in the wilderness. Jesus is baptized to start his ministry and is then tempted in the wilderness.

What do you think people most want when they are in the wilderness? They want to be out of the wilderness! But without fail, it’s in the wilderness that God provides. And it’s not just providing a way out of the wilderness. It is providing life in the wilderness.

Moses is met by God in the burning bush. God provides bread for the Israelites, the bread that Jesus and the people refer to in John 6. David is delivered from harm time and time again. God provides miraculously for Elijah. The Word of God sustains Jesus while he is tempted.

In our wilderness, we say to Jesus I need this very specific thing. And Jesus says, I’ll do you one better – you have me! And in the wilderness, in our need, our job is to trust. Our job is to trust that God provides moment by moment, and God ministers with his presence. And trust means we continue to be faithful and follow, even when in need.

³⁵ **Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”** Don’t hope in bread – hope in the Bread of Life.

³⁶ **But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.”** Jesus has been faithful to us before. He will be faithful to us again. And I promise you: Jesus is faithful right now. Believe in Jesus.