

Food for Thought, Food for Life

By

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“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, you are looking for Me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval.’” John 6:26-27

In this passage above, Jesus is addressing the crowds that followed him to the other side of a lake. The day before, Jesus had just fed over 5000 people with only five small loaves of bread and two small fish. This was an amazing miracle! The disciples even commented that it would have taken 8 months’ wages to pay for enough food to feed all these people. Jesus didn’t raise any funds. He just provided for the need. We could focus solely on Jesus’ ability to provide for our needs from this example, but there is a much deeper message Jesus wanted to impart to his faithful followers.

If you read on in John 6, you will see the conversation between Jesus and the people. They keep trying to understand what Jesus is talking about, as He refers to “heavenly food.” Astutely, they draw a conclusion that He is referring to the “manna in the wilderness”, a story that had been passed down to them for generations of how God fed their ancestors with this bread from Heaven. Finally, Jesus speaks as plainly as He can, as He exclaims, *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen Me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him Who sent Me.” John 6:35-38*

Now, they start grumbling because He claimed He came from heaven. They have difficulty believing this, despite the fact that they just saw Him do an amazing miracle with the fishes and loaves. In Jesus’ estimation, all they really care about is getting some more food. They are hungry for physical things, not the spiritual. Yet, He tries to seize this moment of physical need to see if they are open to the spiritual. He stretches them further:

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” John 6:51

Now, they really think He is crazy for it seems He is suggesting some form of cannibalism. He presses on with His point:

“Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in them.”
John 6:53-56

Again, these “disciples” cannot accept what He is saying. They are offended and outraged. Finally, Jesus says to them:

“Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe... This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father has enabled him.” *John 6:61-65*

Sadly, it is recorded that many of His “disciples” turned back and no longer followed Him. Jesus turns to His 12 and asks a poignant question:

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” *John 6:67*

Peter, never one not to speak up, says, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.”* *John 6:68-69*

What an amazing sequence of events! Jesus demonstrated His ability to feed over 5000 people in a split second, multiplying the tiniest of resources into profound provision. Then, He challenged them to trust Him not only with His ability to meet physical needs, but with His provision for eternal life. Many of His disciples could not accept His teaching, which means they could not accept Him. According to Jesus, the Father must not have “enabled” them to come to Him. Jesus’ closest disciples accepted it, even though they still did not fully understand what He was talking about.

Jesus knew they still didn’t get it because He used an opportunity to repeat the miracle a little later. In Matthew 15:32-38 and Mark 8:1-10, it is recorded that similarly, they were in a remote place and the people were hungry. Jesus was concerned about their hunger. His disciples said, *“Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?”* *Matthew 15:33* Did they really just ask Jesus that question?! How short is their memory?! It says this time Jesus took 7 loaves of bread and a few fish and fed 4000 people. It is interesting to note that it is 1000 less than before. Perhaps that

accounts for the number of people who left Him after the “Bread of Life” teaching. However, I still can’t get over the fact that they didn’t even consider His miraculous ability in the physical. Perhaps they were trying so hard to grasp the spiritual teachings of Jesus that they missed the practical. I’ve heard the phrase, “Don’t be so heavenly-minded that you’re of no earthly good.” Maybe that was the case with these guys.

Then, a third time, Scripture says the disciples were with Jesus in a remote place, and they forgot to bring bread. Jesus looks at them, probably shaking His head, and says, ***“Be careful. Be on guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Saducees.”*** **Matthew 16:6** Yeast? Was He talking about Bread? Holy Bread? They were confused.

Jesus jumps in:

“You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand...Or the seven loaves for the four thousand...How is it that you don’t understand that I was not talking about bread?” **Matthew 16:8-11**

So, as you read these stories about Jesus and His disciples, where is your Faith? Has the Father “enabled” you to come to Jesus and accept Him? If you have eyes to see and ears to hear, I believe this is what Jesus is teaching us:

- He has an amazing ability provide for our physical needs, and He always has compassion for us. He can provide 8 months of resources for us in a single moment.
- He wants us to come to Him, with faith and trust, allowing Him to nurture our spiritual life (from His Word and His Spirit), not worrying about physical provision. We will always have physical needs. We eat today, and we are hungry tomorrow. These physical bodies are temporary. He wants us to focus on the eternal.
- When we abide in Him, we partake in His flesh and blood and we are equipped to live His life for us. Knowing we will live forever should help us live today without fear.
- This life of following Jesus is not easy, and many do not have the faith to do it.

Will you trust Jesus? Will you let Him feed you? Will you quit worrying about the things of this life so you won’t miss Him? Will you believe in Him and follow Him, even when you don’t understand Him? Just as in Jesus’ day, some of His disciples today are deserting Him. But He is turning to you today, like He did to the Twelve, asking, *“Do you want to leave Me too?”* Just some food for thought.