

Date: December 24, 2022  
 Series: *A Chrismon Christmas!*  
 Title: *Jesus: The Bread of Life*  
 Text: John 6:30-35; 47-51  
 Preacher: Mark Adams

For nearly 3,000 years, humans like you and me have eaten bread, but it took the creative efforts of one man to revolutionize the WAY we eat it. I'm referring to Otto Rohwedder, who lived in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. One day Otto overheard a familiar complaint among housewives: slicing bread was burdensome, time-consuming, and sometimes even perilous. Otto wondered: *"What if there was a machine for bakers to pre-slice bread?"* He was so moved to create and to help that he sold his jewelry business and embarked on a long, painful journey to bring his invention to life. In 1916, he built his first prototype of a bread slicing machine in an abandoned warehouse outside of town. But he couldn't find a buyer.

That didn't stop Otto. He just went back to his warehouse and feverishly sketched hundreds of new blueprints. But not too long after that, a fire broke out and all of his blueprints and years of hard work were burned to ash.

He still didn't quit and by 1927, he had built a new and improved bread slicing machine. Unfortunately, nobody showed any interest in the five-foot by three-foot monstrosity. Finally, after a friend stepped in and invested in the project, on July 7, 1928, the first loaf of commercially sliced bread was sold.

A newspaper ad claimed that the sliced bread was *"the greatest forward step in the baking industry since bread was wrapped"*---a phrase which was eventually hacked into the modern-day saying, *"the greatest thing since sliced bread."* Sales of the sliced bread took off. In late 1930, a New York-based company used Rohwedder's machines to build an entire business around sliced bread. Their product was called *Wonder Bread*. Anyone want to guess how much a pre-sliced loaf cost? Five cents!

Today, when we say something is *"the greatest thing since sliced bread,"* we mean it is a testament to ingenuity---something as inspiring as Otto Rohwedder's decades of work to bring FLOURISHING into our world---one slice at a time.

Of course, Rohwedder's bread doesn't bring TRUE flourishing to our lives. It just made life easier for people. A life that is truly FLOURISHING---only comes through faith in Jesus. And---there was a day in His earthly ministry when Jesus said as much. He said, ***"I am the BREAD of life."*** (John 6:48) And at this point I'm going to ask Joed Carbonell and their family to hand tonight's Chrismon ornament---which you can see is a loaf of bread.

Thank you Carbonells!

Here's the setting. Not too long before our Lord said these six words, He had just performed His most popular miracle. It appears in all four Gospels---so I'm sure you remember it. I'm referring to that day when thousands of people followed Him to a hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee. John says there were 5,000 people there, but this was only the head count of the MEN present. If you included the women and children who were no doubt present, there were probably more like 15,000 people crowded together on that hillside to hear Jesus teach---and to see Him heal. Well, about mid-afternoon Jesus turned to His disciples and passionately pointed out the need to feed this huge multitude. In response Andrew brought a little boy to Jesus who was willing to share his lunch of five barley loaves and two small fish. Jesus then miraculously used this meal---intended to fill the belly of a small boy---to stuff the stomachs of 15,000 people and there were even 12 baskets of leftovers!

Jesus left after this miraculous feeding and the next day, some of those who had eaten the bread and fish provided by Jesus searched for Him all over the countryside---on both sides of the Sea of Galilee. The conversation in tonight's text occurred when they finally found Jesus in Capernaum. Take your Bibles and turn to John 6 and let's read what happened. And as we do, if able, let's all stand in respect for God's Word as it's read.

John 6:30-35; 47-51

**30 – So they [all these hungry people] asked Him, “What miraculous sign then will You give that we may see it and believe in You. What will You do?”**

**31 – Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.’”**

**32 – Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from Heaven, but it is My Father, Who gives you the true Bread from Heaven.**

**33 – For the Bread of God is He Who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.”**

**34 – “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.”**

**35 – Then Jesus declared, “I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty.”**

**47 – “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.**

**48 – I am the Bread of LIFE.**

**49 – Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.**

**50 – But here is the Bread that comes down from Heaven, which a man may eat and not die.**

**51 – I am the living Bread that came down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”**

In this familiar text we see that this multitude of people bought into a misconception about hunger—the same misconception people still buy into today. They thought that PHYSICAL food—physical things—will satisfy the hungers of life.

We see this in the way Jesus responded to the people that day. For example, the word we translate as “saw” in verse 26 means “to see with perception.” Jesus was telling them that they SAW the loaves---UNSLICED of course---but they didn’t PERCEIVE the meaning behind it all. They failed to see the true nature of Jesus. All they did was eat the food. All they got out of the miracle on the hillside the day before was a full belly.

Further proof of their misconception is seen in the word “filled.” It’s a Greek word that was used to describe a COW receiving food. Since they have four of them, cows think primarily with their stomachs. They don’t thank the farmer who fed them or ask the purpose of the food. No—they are just a four-footed food processor. To them life is just a string of days where they focus on filling their tummies.

So, Jesus was saying that these people were acting like a herd of cows. The message of the miracle failed to penetrate their understanding. They thought only of their material needs. They sought Jesus only because they were hungry again. To them the PHYSICAL—the TEMPORARY—was all that mattered—and because of that they saw the miracle—but the MESSAGE behind it went right over their heads.

And—we mustn’t be too critical of these people because physical FOOD is a priority in all of our lives—even today. In fact, as I speak, there’s a good chance you are all thinking about the special Christmas Eve food you’ll have after this service.

Here’s something else we need to remember---in order for us to fully understand this text. Our 21<sup>st</sup> century abundance of food makes it hard to fully appreciate the perspective of these people struggling to survive in first-century Galilee. The full stomachs these people had experienced because of Jesus’ miracle was probably a rare thing for them—perhaps a first. So don’t be too down on them. They woke up the day after the miracle hungry. That motivated them to find Jesus—their miracle performing meal ticket—so they could have full stomachs again.

And note that Jesus didn’t really CRITICIZE them for coming to Him for more food. He just took that teachable moment to tell them that He had come to do far more than fill their bellies. He was using their physical hunger as a springboard to address their spiritual hunger. He was trying to help them understand that the things of this world—do not satisfy the longing we all have for God. This is a message we need to hear as well because you can be as rich as Jeff Bezos and still

be hungry for more. You can have everything this world has to offer—and still be unsatisfied. No matter how big the pile of gifts under your tree—you won't be satisfied.

As someone once put it: *“With all our ingesting and consumption, our hungers are still many and our fulfillments are few.”*

In the first century the luxury of the upper class of the Roman Empire was unparalleled. Maybe you remember reading in your history books that it was during this time that the Romans served feasts of things like peacock brains and nightingale tongues. They even took something to induce vomiting between courses so that they could eat more. Meals like this that cost tens of thousands of today's dollars and were commonplace in the mansions of Rome.

And there was a REASON for all this indulgence. There was a deep dissatisfaction—a hunger that they were trying in vain to satisfy. These Romans sought anything that would give a new thrill and a new taste in life. I mean, like many people in our day and age, they were appallingly rich but at the same time appallingly hungry. So, let's not be like those hungry people who sought out Jesus that day. Let's not miss Jesus' point here! Our Lord was saying that it is foolish to focus on PHYSICAL satisfaction because there are far more important hungers in life—and they can only be satisfied by Him—the BREAD OF LIFE.

- There is the hunger for TRUTH and JESUS IS THE TRUTH—the answer to all of life's questions.
- There is the hunger for LIFE and JESUS ALONE CAN GIVE US LIFE—ABUNDANT LIFE---A LIFE THAT IS ETERNAL IN BOTH CALIBER AND DURATION.
- There is the hunger for LOVE and JESUS ALONE CAN GIVE PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME A LOVE THAT OUTLASTS even DEATH.
- There is the hunger for GOD and only through Jesus can we come into a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Christ alone can satisfy the insatiable hunger of the human heart and soul. It's foolish to look for satisfaction anywhere else. Why is this so? Why can Jesus alone satisfy these hungers?

Because as we read back in verse 27 of this chapter, Jesus alone has the seal of God the Father.

It's almost like food in GIANT that has the FDA stamp of approval that says, *“This is good. This is pure.”* Jesus is the only way to satisfy this inborn inner longing we all have because He alone has God's stamp of approval. He alone is the BREAD OF LIFE.

You know, even today Rohwedder's sliced bread is a staple food in our pantries, but it was even more so in 1<sup>st</sup> century Judea. Back then bread was necessary for life. In our culture, when we go to a restaurant, we generally focus on what kind of entree we're going to order and the basket of bread on the table is secondary. But in Jesus' day, it was just the opposite. Meat was a side dish and bread represented the major part of the meal. Without bread the people of His day would starve.

So, Jesus was saying, *“You want bread? Do you want what is TRULY ESSENTIAL for life? Well, look no further for I am the Bread of Life! My body will be broken—My blood shed—so that Your hunger for God can be satisfied. You need the forgiveness that I will make possible just as desperately as you do your daily bread. I am what you are looking for. In the same way you can't survive without bread you can't do without Me. I have come to satisfy your inner longings.”*

Listen—people all around us are HUNGRY. The things of this world do not satisfy—and they long for more. I love how Tim Keller puts it. He writes:

*“Do you remember when your mother used to say, ‘Don't eat candy before meals?’ Why did she say that? Because she knew it would ruin your next meal. The trouble with eating candy is that it gives you a sugar buzz, and then you don't feel hungry. Candy masks the fact that your body needs proteins and vitamins. The sugar buzz from candy masks your hunger for the real nutrients that you don't have. Things like sex, power, money, and success—as well as favorable circumstances—act like spiritual sugar. Christians who have these spiritual candies may say, ‘Sure, I believe in God, and*

*I know I'm going to Heaven,'---but they're actually basing their day-to-day joy on favorable circumstances. When the circumstances change, it drives us to God, because when the sugar disappears, when the candy gets taken away, we're forced to pursue the feast that our souls really crave. We'll hunger for the spiritual nutrients we really need."*

It's our responsibility as Christians—people who have tasted the BREAD OF LIFE—to point people to Jesus Who alone can satisfy the hunger of the human soul. A good question for us all to ask ourselves is this: *"Does the way I live make people hungry for Jesus?"*

Years ago, during a Saturday afternoon community service day, Bryan White was walking down a narrow side street in the city of Compton, California---heading towards one of the community worksites sponsored by a coalition of churches in that area. It was towards the end of the workday, and dozens of yellow-shirted church volunteers—maybe 50 in all---were streaming out of the site, getting ready to head off to a late lunch after finishing a complete makeover of a local house. Bryan shares,

*"I was six or eight houses away when I passed a married couple working in their own yard. I paused to compliment the woman on her roses, and she asked me what we were doing down the street. I replied that we represented a band of churches united in our desire to serve the city. Then we continued chatting about the radical neighborhood transformation she had witnessed by our simple acts of goodness. During my conversation with this woman her husband had been weed-whacking the other side of the front yard. But when he saw my yellow 'volunteer shirt,' he turned off his weed-whacker, set it down, and started walking straight towards me and his wife. I will never forget his words. After looking into my eyes, he nodded approvingly towards the renovated house down the street and then said, 'I love your heart. Where can I get a heart like yours?' Flabbergasted, I simply said, 'We got our hearts from Jesus, and He would be glad to give you one like his, too.' Before I had to head off, we had a great conversation about the unparalleled gospel of Jesus Christ and his power to change hearts, homes, neighborhoods, and cities."*

People like this man have a heart hunger—and the only way to satisfy it is by asking Jesus to come into that heart. I mean, people think they're hungry for popularity or money or power or success or prestige or pleasure or physical intimacy—but their REAL hunger is for "food" that lasts. Their real hunger is for God! And only Jesus can satisfy that hunger. We symbolize this fact—and also COMMIT TO SHARE IT—through COMMUNION—this ordinance Jesus gave us on the night of His arrest. As we share this meal, let me invite all Christians present to partake with us---because even if you are not a member of this church---if you are a Christian---if you are His, this is yours.

THE ORDINANCE OF COMMUNION