

"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." It was a beautiful spring day and I was riding in an open air jeep driven by friend who was showing me his spectacular ranch. He was successful by any measure - beautiful wife, loving family, gorgeous home in the best part of town and a big ranch equipped with plenty of four-wheel toys to explore the property. He even owned a couple of airplanes. As we crested a hill providing us with a glorious view of the river below, he stopped the jeep and turned off the engine. We sat quietly and let the serenity sink in. Then he broke the silence with these words, "This is the last place I ever sat with my son. He took his life while he was in college. Gary, I would give everything I own for 15 more minutes with my son."

This was a moment of clarity. You can have a lot of stuff but there are some things so precious that you would trade everything you have to obtain them. When you get to the end of your life what will it matter if you have everything you ever wanted if you don't have what matters most? And what is that?

There's a story in the Bible about another man who had it all. In fact, this guy won the trifecta in the social status derby. He was rich, young and a ruler. This overachiever asked Jesus, "What do I have to do to have eternal life." Jesus said, "You know the commandments." The man said, "I've done that. I've obeyed the Law my whole life." Then Jesus bores in, "**One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.**" Lk. 18:22. You lack one thing. One thing? You lack me. Stop treasuring money and start treasuring me. You want eternal life? You want to enter the kingdom of heaven? You can't get there without me. Be connected to me. Jesus is the bread of life, the one thing we really need.

We are considering 7 "I am" statements from the gospel of John, statements connected to 7 signs Jesus displayed to demonstrate His divinity. He claimed to be the great I AM of Exodus 3. Not only was He making a direct claim to Deity but He was also revealing that He and He alone is the source of the life we've always wanted. John is not timid about the purpose of his gospel, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Jn. 20:30-31. How can I find the life I've always wanted? Turn to John 6 and let's think about what we want compared to what we really need.

Jesus has just miraculously fed 5,000 people with a couple of fish and a few loaves of bread to support His claim later in the chapter, "I am the bread of life." The people were so impressed they wanted to make Him king...v. 15. This was a guy who could give them everything their hearts desired. **The search for life is fueled by desire.** We all have desires but we're not very good at distinguishing between our wants and our needs. Some people, like A-List celebrity divas, are particularly bad at this. Rihanna needs white tulips in her dressing room along with Titanium straws to drink her 21-degree water. Kanye requires a barber's chair and a Coke and Hennessy slushy machine. Beyonce has to have red toilet paper. Mariah Carey 20 white kittens. Then there those with simpler needs like Blake Shelton who just wants barbeque Lays, Cheetos and beef jerky and Jay-Z who just

needs "good quality" peanut butter and jelly and a clean bucket of ice. It's not just A-list celebrities that confuse wants and needs. There is a diva in all of us. I know a pastor who travels with his own shower head...and the wrench and pliers to go with it. You may not "need" red toilet paper or titanium straws but how many pair of shoes do you "need?"

We all have desires. The only people who don't live in cemeteries. You don't have to give up your desires in order to gain Christ. But you do have to look in the right place...vv. 22-27. Jesus challenged their superficial desires by suggesting that we cannot find here on earth what can only be found in Heaven. C.S. Lewis once said, **"If I have found a desire within myself that no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."** Jesus tells the people not to waste their time working to satisfy their wants. When they hear the word "work" they naturally assume there is no such thing as free lunch so they ask what they need to do.

The search for life is not rewarded by human effort... v. 28. Their question is based on the common assumption that the harder we work the better the chance that we will get what we want. After all, doesn't the Bible say, "God helps those who help themselves?" No it doesn't. Jesus said...v. 29.

Even in the O.T. the prophets spoke of the free gift of the bread of life. **Isaiah 55:1-2** "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance."

Americans work their fingers to the bone to have a few years called "retirement" thinking retirement is the last chapter. It isn't. It is the next to the last chapter. Eternity is the last chapter. And it lasts forever and it is infinitely happy. When you eat of the bread of life a new chapter is added to your life. The offer of a satisfying life which requires no effort sounds too good to be true. How can we be sure? That's the question asked in vv. 30-31.

The search for life is a search for certainty. This is an amazing question in the aftermath of the miraculous feeding of 5,000. I know people like this. No matter how much evidence you give them they remain unconvinced. Our skeptical hearts seek certainty. That is why John emphasizes seven "signs." The people remained unconvinced. Some skeptic in the crowd must have said, "Sure Jesus fed 5,000 but Moses fed a nation; Jesus did it once; Moses did it for 40 years; Jesus multiplied regular bread, Moses gave the people bread from heaven, out of thin air. They seem to be saying that unless Jesus feeds the whole nation of Israel the way Moses was able to do with the manna (Ex. 16:11-36), they would not believe. It's ironic that the O.T. verse they choose to quote is Ps. 78:24, a psalm about the graciousness of God in the face of Israel's rebellion.

The search for life is satisfied by Jesus, the bread of life...32-35. The manna God provided was only a temporary solution. God provided this manna as a shadow of the reality to come. Jesus is the TRUE bread that came out of heaven to satisfy man's deepest

hunger. The manna in the desert didn't come from Moses, it came from God and that bread is still available ("still gives").

What is it you want? Is it possible that the things you are chasing will never satisfy your deepest desire? You thought you needed a mate but what you were looking for is intimacy and companionship. You fought hard for that promotion because you not only deserved it but you needed it. What you were looking for was significance. We envy those with more money than we have but what we really need is security. We attempt to satisfy our deepest desires with superficial solutions. We're not addressing the problem but only the symptom. It reminds me of the person who discovers a crack in the wall of their home. They tape and texture and paint over the cracks and they come back. Eventually the homeowner discovers that the problem is much deeper. The problem is not the wall but the foundation. The source of our problem is that we have not discovered the source of our true satisfaction. If you're living without purpose, don't go out and buy a bigger TV. If you're living without joy in your life, don't go out and buy a Happy Meal.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will not hunger and He who believes in Me will never thirst." Jesus came down as bread from heaven to satisfy the hunger in our souls. Are you disappointed? You have known some success but somehow it isn't enough. **"If I have found a desire within myself that no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."**

The first step in the Christian experience is a profound dissatisfaction with this life and a longing for a higher kind of life, a chronic hunger. The bread of life is the only solution to that hunger. Just as a sign points beyond itself Jesus used these "signs" to point men beyond themselves. Do you have the bread of life? It's possible that we can appreciate the bread of life, explain the bread of life, proclaim the bread of life, but still be hungry because we have not received the bread of life. "The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." All you have to say is, "Sir, give us this bread always."

One day a beggar walked into a bakery. “I want some bread,” he said.

“How wise you are,” the baker assured him. “Bread is what you need. And you have come to the right bakery.” So he pulled his cookbook down from his shelf and began to tell the beggar all he knew about bread. He spoke of flour and wheat, of grain and barley. The baker’s knowledge impressed even himself as he cited the measurements and recipe. When he looked up, he was surprised to see that the beggar wasn’t smiling. “I just want bread,” he said.

“How wise you are.” The baker applauded his choice. “Follow me, and I’ll show you our bakery.” He guided him down the hallowed halls, pausing to point out the rooms where the dough is prepared and the ovens where the bread is baked. “No one has such facilities. We have bread for every need. But here is the best part,” he proclaimed as he pushed open two swinging doors. “This is our room of inspiration.” The baker knew the beggar would be impressed as they stepped into the auditorium full of stained-glass windows. The beggar didn’t speak. The baker understood his silence. With his arm around his shoulder, he whispered, “It overwhelms me too.”

Then the baker leaped to the podium and struck his favorite pose behind the lectern. “People come from miles to hear me speak. Once a week my workers gather, and I read to them the recipe from the cookbook of life.” By now the beggar had taken a seat on the front row. The baker knew what he wanted. “Would you like to hear me?” “No,” he said, “but I would like some bread.”

“How wise you are,” The baker replied. And he led him to the front door of the bakery. “What I have to say next is very important,” he told him as they stood outside. “Up and down this street you will find many bakeries. But take heed; they don’t serve the true bread. I know of one who adds two spoons of salt rather than one. I know of another whose oven is three degrees too hot. They may call it bread,” the baker warned, “but it’s not according to the book.”

The beggar turned and began walking away. “Wait, don’t you want bread?” the baker asked him. He stopped, looked back, and shrugged, “I guess I lost my appetite.” The baker shook his head and returned to his office. “What a shame,” he said to himself. “The world just isn’t hungry for true bread anymore.”

Put your hands out palms up...give me one pure and holy passion. Give me one magnificent obsession. Give me one