The Bread of Heaven
John 6:33, 35, 51
January 4, 2004

SERMON NOTES

A. Introduction: Bread — The Staff of Life

B. The Setting of the Incident
   1. place and time
      a. near to the John 6:4
      b. which was in the
      c. of a period in Jesus’ ministry which ended at the feast of ... John 7:1
      d. The other gospels start recording this period
         (A) Matthew 14:13
         (B) Mark 6:30
         (C) Luke 9:10
      e. Feasts previously mentioned in John
         (A) Passover John 2:13
         (B) unnamed, possibly Passover or Purim John 5:1
   2. situation
      a. follows feeding of John 6:10
      b. and the people wanting to make Him John 6:14-15
      c. and coming to disciples on John 6:19

C. Jesus, the Bread, gives Life John 6:33 (NIV)
   For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.
   1. bread speaks of the incarnation = “God in the flesh”
      a. John 1:14a
      b. Galatians 4:4a
   2. bread speaks of the life-giving purpose of the incarnation
      a. 1 Timothy 1:15a

D. Jesus, the Bread, makes Life Satisfying John 6:35 (NIV)
   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.”
   1. one can be alive, but very hungry
   2. Jesus deals with this shortcoming
      a. John 10:10b
      b. Ephesians 3:19

E. Jesus, the Bread, makes Life Eternal John 6:51 (NIV)
   I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.
   1. it is insufficient to be merely filled with food, no longer hungry
   2. Jesus deals with the real need
      a. John 6:27
      b. John 6:40
A. **Introduction**

1. Bread: the staff of life
   a. The other morning on a news broadcast, I heard that the latest scare about “mad cow” disease hasn’t seemed to curtailed the American public’s eating of beef. But there was an interesting side note. It seems that over the past year or so, there has been a marked decrease in the sale of bread. Yes, that’s bread! This is being linked to the increasing desire to keep off the excess weight for which bread is being blamed. In fact, they had an interview with a lady named Amy — no, not our Amy — who owned and ran a bakery called “Amy’s Bread.” Her comment was that people say “No, I don’t need bread” in a tone of voice as though bread were poison! Well, if they didn’t put so much sugar into bread, and make it with such highly refined flour — they mill out all, or almost all, of the bran which the food industry turns around and sells in the form of bran flakes (to which they also add too much sugar — if they didn’t do these things to our bread, then it would probably remain as our healthy “staff of life.”
   b. But in the times of the Bible, bread was the staple diet and meat was relatively an exception. Throughout Europe and around the Mediterranean, bread constituted the main meal. Evidence of this is readily apparent if you walk by the stores in a highly ethnic area and see the immense variety of breads that come from that region. More evidence was on Friday’s news from Iran where they are using a bread-making truck as a way of bringing food to the earthquake victims. So when Jesus taught us to pray, saying, “Give us this day our daily bread” He was talking about all the food necessary for one’s sustenance. And when in John 6:48 He says, “I AM the Bread of Life,” He is saying, I am all you need for your sustenance. This morning we are going to look at this aspect of the bread that is part of our communion service.

2. Now, let’s look at 3 verses from the passage we read in John 6,
   a. John 6:33 (NAS): For the bread of God is that {or better, HE} which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.
   b. John 6:35 (NAS): Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”
   c. John 6:51 (NAS): I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.
B. **The Setting of this Incident**

1. place and time
   a. now, this sixth chapter of John, marks the beginning of a 6-month period in the ministry of our Lord Jesus
      (A) beginning, as we see in John 6:4, in the spring-time just before the Passover; and, ending as we find in John 7:1, at the feast of tabernacles
      (B) with their attendance at the Passover probably taking place in the closing verses of John 6 — although the fact does not seem to be explicitly recorded in John or in any of the other gospels
      (C) and you will find the parallel recording of this period, on which John spends very little time, in the other gospels beginning at Matthew 14:13, Mark 6:30, or Luke 9:10 (those references are in your hand-out)
   b. now this period
      (A) was at least a year after the start of His public ministry for we find that there was a previous Passover in 2:13
      (B) and most scholars think it was after 2 years of ministry with the feast in 5:1 also believed to be a Passover
      (C) and in this time, we find Jesus
         (1) spending more time away from public ministry
         (2) teaching His disciples in special ways
      (D) mainly in Capernaum and around the Sea of Galilee

2. situation
   a. now this chapter begins with the history of the feeding of the 5000 which is also recorded in the other Gospels
   b. then going to pray, sending them by boat across the sea
      (A) but seeing their struggle against contrary winds
      (B) Jesus joins them by walking on the Sea of Galilee
      (C) and the boat is taken to the other shore immediately
   c. because He fed them, the people want to make them King
   d. as we see in the passage read, Jesus reveals He is not a political deliverer like Moses, so many disciples
leave him

C. **Jesus, the Bread, gives Life**

1. John 6:33 (NAS): For the bread of God is that {or better, HE} which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.

2. the bread speaks of the incarnation
   a. we have just come though the Christmas season
      (A) the messages of the angels, the shepherds, and the wise men are still fresh in our minds
      (B) and we have been reminded again of the inutterable, the indescribable truth, that the Almighty Eternal God entered history in the Babe born in Bethlehem
   b. and in the sixth chapter of John we saw that the bread was his flesh — that God was incarnate, in the flesh
      (A) John 1:14a (NAS): And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, ...
      (B) Galatians 4:4a (NAS): But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, ...

3. the bread speaks of the purpose of the incarnation
   a. as in the natural, so in the supernatural
      (A) bread is a life-giver — this very day, people in Iran are keenly aware of that fact as the truck comes to them
      (B) and the analogy carries into the spiritual realm
      (C) the incarnation was to bring Bread — life — to man
   b. 1 Timothy 1:15a (NAS): It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, ...
   c. Luke 22:19 (NAS): And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”
D. **Jesus, the Bread, makes Life Satisfying**

1. John 6:35 (NAS): Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

2. alive, but hungry
   a. we should all be very well aware of the difference
   b. countless millions in the world live at subsistence level
   c. people can have sufficient goods but be unsatisfied
   d. Augustine has said that we are created with a God-shaped vacuum in our soul, or words to that effect

3. Jesus Christ came to fill that vacuum
   a. John 10:10b (NAS): … I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.
   b. Ephesians 3:19 (NAS): and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

E. **Jesus, the Bread, makes Life Eternal**

1. John 6:51 (NAS): I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.

2. Having food, even if filled, is not enough
   a. don’t take this as being hard-hearted, but consider: if I send food and goods to those in this world who are needy — and I expect that our Fellowship will issue a “F.A.I.R.” appeal for the calamity in Iran — and that is all I do, then what I have done borders upon the useless ... because I haven’t dealt with the ultimate destroyers: sin and death
   b. we agonize, as Canadians, about our health-care system, that it should be able to handle all manner of disease — by so doing I shove off into a corner of my mind the fact that I will end my existence here on earth in the same way as have about 3 billion before me, in death

3. but Jesus, the Bread, has dealt with death
   a. so this bread reminds us to get our priorities straight
b. John 6:27 (NAS): Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.

c. John 6:40 (NAS): For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.

F. Conclusion — as we partake of this bread this morning, which speaks of His body given for us, let us remember that Jesus Christ, the Bread, gives us life, gives us abundant life, gives us eternal life, and give thanks.
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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more that one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

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- AV Authorized (King James) Version
- NAS New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
- NIV New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
- RSV Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.

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