

Food for the Soul

John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; & he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

John 6:47-48 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life.

Look at one more statement -- this one found in **verse 51**. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever:
& the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

You & I were created to live in a relationship with God! Until we find that relationship, there will always be something missing in our life! Saint Augustine, one of the great theologians of the past, use to say: "**Man is made for Thee, O God, & he is restless until he finds his rest in Thee.**" As a result, we are often aware of a gap, an inner void, a feeling that something is truly missing deep on the inside of us. One rock singer described it by saying: "**I've got an emptiness deep inside.**" A housewife wrote a friend saying: "I have a deep deep void." A young girl spoke of "a chunk missing in her soul."

People often try to fill this emptiness in various ways. Some try to close the gap with **money**, but money does not satisfy! Aristotle Onassis, who was one of the richest men in the world, said at the end of his life: "Millions do not always add up to what a man needs out of life." Others try **drugs**, or **alcohol abuse**, or even **sexual permissiveness**. One girl said: "These things provide instant gratification, but they leave you feeling hollow afterwards." Still others try **hard work**, **music**, or **sports**, while others seek **success** or **fame**. There may not be anything wrong with these in themselves, but they do not satisfy that **hunger** deep inside every human being!

Even the closest human relationships, wonderful though they are, do not in themselves satisfy this "emptiness deep on the inside." **Nothing will fill this gap, this inner void, except a real personal relationship with God for which you & I were created!** According to the Bible, the reason for this emptiness is that we have turned our backs on God! Centuries ago, & in a distant land, there was a carpenter's son, turned preacher, who attracted crowds of people. They were drawn to Him, not only because of what He **said**, but also because of what He **did**. Every now & then He'd perform a miracle.

Once He took a boy's simple lunch & produced enough food to feed 5,000 hungry people. Moreover, there was plenty of food left over!

Small wonder that the people were impressed by this Jesus of Nazareth. Some of them readily recognized what a grand & good thing they could have going for them in someone like this new & exciting "people feeder." The crowd became so excited & thrilled over this great miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, that they cried out to this Jesus, "Master, show us another miracle! You're tremendous! We've never met anyone like you. How about giving us another sign? You know that Moses fed people with manna from heaven for 40 days. Can you do a sign or a miracle bigger than that?"

Jesus astounded the crowd with His reply, as the drama unfolds in John's Gospel, chapter 6. Jesus said, "**I am the bread of life**" (John 6:35). "I am, in fact, the very Bread you are looking for!"

Let's listen again to the words of Jesus as found in John 6. Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry,

& he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I **am the bread of life.**”

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

The crowd was there looking for bread, & Jesus was there to supply Bread, but there was a big difference in how they interpreted it. Jesus Christ could not have **done** what He did, nor **say** what He did had He not been **Who** He was! He was, in fact, the Son of God! Jesus knew that **only He**, the Bread of Life, could give people the peace & the joy they were looking for. Bread, in the Bible, is a symbol of spiritual life. And mankind has an inborn hunger for God! God alone, through Jesus Christ, can supply the **true bread** that will satisfy your heart & your soul & spirit!

When Jesus Christ said: “I am the Bread of Life” He meant that He is the all-sufficient supply for man’s deepest need; the need that lies deep within the human soul. Jesus Christ is the only One who can satisfy our deepest hunger, because He is the only One who makes it possible for us to be restored to a right relationship with God. In the light of this profound truth, consider with me three important facts: --

1. Only Jesus Christ Satisfies Our Hunger for Forgiveness!

If we are totally honest, we will all have to admit that we have done things that we know are wrong! There are some things we have done for which we are deeply ashamed! Furthermore, our hearts are unclean, from within. Out of man’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, envy, slander, & folly! All these evils come from inside us & make us unclean!

What we fail to realize is that our greatest need is not **happiness**, but rather our greatest need is **forgiveness**. It takes a very proud person to say he/she has **no need** for forgiveness. We all need to be forgiven! Without forgiveness we are in serious trouble! For God is not only our loving Father, He is also a righteous Judge. Either we accept what Jesus has done for us on the cross, or else one day we will pay the just penalty ourselves for all the things we have done wrong. **Our greatest need is for forgiveness!**

Just as a man who has cancer needs a doctor, whether he realizes it or not, so we need forgiveness whether we realize it or not! Just as with cancer, the person who recognizes his/her **need** is far better off than the person who has fallen into a false sense of security! Our sinfulness separates us from God, but by His death on the Cross, Jesus made it possible for us to be forgiven & brought into a relationship with God! In this way Jesus Christ supplied the answer to our deepest need! There is no greater joy in life than to know that our sins have been forgiven!

A group of Christian missionaries were meeting in Delhi, India, with representatives of other religions, to discuss their various beliefs. In the course of their talks a member of a major non-Christian religion said to a missionary: “Tell me one thing your religion can offer the people of India that mine cannot” The missionary thought for a moment & then replied: “**Forgiveness!** Forgiveness.” There is no other religion in the world that offers Divine forgiveness of sin! There is not a more beautiful word than that word “forgiven.”

2. Only Jesus Christ Satisfies Our Hunger for Meaning & Purpose!

At some point in life everyone asks questions like, “Who am I? Why am I here? Is there any purpose in life? What am I doing here on earth? What is the point of life?” As the philosopher & author Albert Camus once said: “**Man cannot live without meaning.**” Somehow we want to know the answers to the basic issues of life!

Thousands of **philosophers** over the centuries have said what **they think** may, or may not be, true about the purpose & meaning of life. If we could put all of their works into a single volume, it would not tell us very much! All philosophers can do is speculate! The only **reliable** source of information we have is the **Bible**.

The B-I-B-L-E -- yes, that's the Book for me! The Bible; -- B-I-B-L-E -- could well stand for Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. The Bread of Life, Jesus Christ Himself, gives us the answers! The Bible alone contains the real answers to life's greatest questions! The Bible tells us that God created us in His very own image. God desires to have a relationship with us & enjoy fellowship with us!

Until we are living in relationship with God, we will never find the true meaning & purpose of life! Other things in life may provide a passing satisfaction, but it does not last! Only in a relationship with our Creator God, through His Son Jesus Christ, do we find the true meaning & purpose of our lives! Only the Bread of Life satisfies our hunger for meaning & purpose.

Austrian psychiatrist Victor Frankl spent years as a Jewish prisoner in a German concentration camp during World War II. Life there was unbelievably harsh & brutal. Prisoners were forced to work long hours & were barely given enough food, clothing & shelter to survive. As the months unfolded, Frankl began to notice that some prisoners soon collapsed under the pressure, & gave up & died, while others under the same conditions continued to hope & managed to stay alive. Using the tools of his psychiatric training, Frankl would talk in the evenings to scores of fellow inmates, & as he did so he noticed that a pattern began to emerge.

Those prisoners who had **something** for which to live, an objective that gave a sense of meaning to their lives, were the ones who tended to mobilize their strength & survive. In the end, Frankl concluded that **the need to find meaning in life is more basic to a human being than pleasure, or power, or anything else**. He writes, "If a person has a 'why' to live, he can endure almost any 'how'. But if that dimension of 'why' is lacking, then the whole structure of one's life eventually collapses." My friends, Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, gives us meaning & purpose, the "why" of life!

3. Only Jesus Christ Satisfies Our Hunger for Life Beyond Death!

Most people do not like to think about the subject of death! They don't know what will happen, & don't want to talk, nor even to think about death. We like to think that our own death is a long way off, some where in the far distant future. A gravestone had this inscription: "**I expected this, but not just yet.**"

The fact is that we will all die someday, & it may be sooner than later. But with Christ, the Bread of life in our hearts, we are given the gift of Eternal Life! Only in Jesus Christ do we find eternal life, for our relationship with God, which starts now, **survives death** & goes on into **eternity!** In choosing the Bread of life, you choose Eternal life!

The Apostle Paul was able to say: "For me to live is Christ & to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). **There is power in a well-lived life for God!** The Bible views death as the means by which we leave this earth to enter into the presence of God!

A soldier was in a foxhole in Europe, in water up to his knees & bullets zipping by. A sergeant came up to him & called his name: "Private Smith!" "Yes sir," was the quick reply. "Report back to headquarters," the sergeant said. The young soldier asked, "Why?" "You're going home." The soldier said, "What! And leave this foxhole?" **As Christians we are going home! leaving this foxhole!** Death for the Christian is a turning off the light because the dawn has come! Death is the golden chariot that ushers us into the very presence of God!

Conclusion: When Jesus said: "I am the Bread of life," He meant that He is the all-sufficient supply for man's soul! When a woman wants a permanent wave, she goes neither to the bakery shop, nor the lumber yard, but to a hair dresser, for **there** she thinks she can get what she desires. When a boy has a broken arm, his father rushes him, not to the grocery store, but to the doctor, for **there** his needs may be met. So it is with Jesus Christ! When we realize that we are lost in sin & without God, & without hope in the world; **when we realize a real spiritual hunger**, if we simply come to Jesus, the Bread of life, **we will find forgiveness, & purpose & meaning, & eternal life!**

Jesus has declared: "Blessed are they which do hunger & thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Only Jesus Christ can satisfy the deep hunger of the human heart & soul!

During a period of social change & experimentation, hallmarks of the 60's & early 70's, a mother & dad sent their daughter, Vicki, a beautiful young lady, off to the University of California, with high hopes. Instead, she found her "home" among the "flower children" in the Haight-Ashbury District of San Francisco.

Broken hearted, the parents took her to visit their pastor, hoping he could say something that would provide her a new direction. With long blond hair & sandals, Vicki sat across from the pastor, as if she were a prisoner, flanked by her two parents as guards.

They visited together for a while, & then the pastor asked her what she thought about God. She looked up at him with glassy eyes & said: "**I've found God in LSD, man.** Every Friday night me & my friends conduct services." Then, with a dreamy smile, she said: "It's beautiful. You don't know what god is until you've seen him in a tab of acid."

The pastor smiled back at her & said: "**I've found God in Jesus Christ;** you claim to have found Him in LSD. Let's have a little contest." She looked at the pastor with suspicion. "God is love," the pastor said. "Would you agree?" She nodded! The pastor went on. "Love is helping people. Would you agree with that as well?" She screwed up her face, not sure where he was going with this, but finally she agreed.

Then the pastor gave a challenge: "How much have you done to help the poor during your so-called services, Vicki? How much have you given to the **hungry**? How much **hope** have you spread? How much **comfort** have you given?" Vicki sat there silently, pondering his questions. The pastor then said: "I have to tell you, Vicki, I don't think that you've truly seen God's love as an active force through LSD."

He could tell that she was listening -- that he was getting through.

He asked her & the parents to stand, & joining hands, he invited them to pray with him. He prayed, "Jesus, I've personally experienced Your spirit of love. You are the Bread of Life. We don't need a chemical to create an experience with You. I pray that You'll come into the heart & life of this fine young woman."

When they opened their eyes, the pastor noticed a tear trickling down Vicki's cheek. He reached his finger up to touch the tear-drop. "Look, Vicki," he said holding the moistened finger up for her to see. "When this tear was forming & falling, didn't you feel beautiful inside?" She nodded, & more tears began to fall.

"Vicki," he said, "this is the deepest & most joyous experience a human being can know. **It's religious emotion.** It's the movement of a Divine Spirit within you. Christ is coming into your life; let Him come in. This is God's love, Vicki. This is reality."

When she left that day Vicki was changed, truly **born again!** She had come to know the Bread of Life, the only One who can truly satisfy the hunger of the human heart!

Jesus Christ is, in fact, the substance of life! He is the Bread of Life! You can come to Jesus Christ & partake of Him, an act so simple that even a child can do it & understand it! You can simply open your heart to Jesus Christ & discover the Bread of life. He will forgive you of your sins; He will give you a purpose for life; He will give you the gift of eternal life!

Adam & Eve ate of the forbidden fruit in the garden, & as a result they died; they died spiritually! We can eat the Bread of Life today & truly live! As the song writer has so beautifully put it , "Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more."

Fill my cup, Lord -- I lift it up, Lord! Come & quench this thirsting of my soul.

Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more; Fill my cup, -- fill it up & make me whole.

-- Richard Blanchard

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November 16, 2014 -- Sunday Morning