

Week of April 22-28

## **BREAD OF LIFE**

**Scripture Reading:** Read John chapter 6

Bread. A dictionary will give you several options in defining the term. It can refer to literal bread - a kind of food made of flour or meal that has been mixed with milk or water, made into a dough or batter, with or without yeast or other leavening agent, and baked. It can refer to money. It can be used formally to refer to the Communion wafer or bread. Finally, it can refer to food or sustenance; livelihood. If the dictionary writer had read John chapter 6, he or she would have had to offer up one more definition for bread...Jesus.

In today's chapter, the word bread is used repeatedly by Jesus and the crowds that followed him. In fact, the word is used seventeen times in John chapter 6. In a third of these uses, it refers to actual, literal bread that people eat. The remaining dozen times, the term is used in reference to Jesus. He is the bread of life. He is the true bread. He is the bread of God who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. He is the living bread. If anyone eats of this bread, he will not die but live forever. He who eats this bread will never go hungry.

Jesus claimed to be the authentic and only real source of spiritual nourishment. Although the manna fed the Israelites physically, only God can nourish us spiritually, and he does so through his Son, Jesus, the bread of life. More than that, it is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus that we can be "fed eternally;" that is, receive eternal life. As Jesus makes clear in verse 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."*

Only Jesus can truly satisfy the spiritual hunger in our souls. He alone is the only complete and permanent satisfaction for the human desire for life. Augustine, a 4<sup>th</sup> century pastor in Africa, put it this way in his Confessions, *"Our hearts are restless until they rest in you."* The 17<sup>th</sup> century French mathematician, philosopher and physicist, Blaise Pascal noted, *"There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus."* We already saw this in John 4 when Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman. It is a theme that we will return to again and again in John's gospel.

Sadly, most of the crowds of disciples felt that Jesus had gone too far. His saying was too hard to swallow so they turned back and no longer followed him. They were unable to see the spiritual realities Jesus sought to convey. They failed to understand that to eat the bread is to trust in Jesus, and Jesus alone. It is to remain in him and he in us.

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** What have you been doing to fill that spiritual hunger inside? Have you tried everything else but Jesus? Only he can truly satisfy. You were made for him. Trust in him today. If you're already a believer, why not try singing the song, Hungry, by Jeremy Camp or listening to it online. Let it express your heart's cry.

**Take-away:** *Whole wheat, rye, or white? No, just give me Jesus, the bread of life!*