

081124 "**The Bread of Life**" John 6:47-51

1. In this passage, Jesus makes one of His most profound and transformative statements: "I am the bread of life." These words resonate through time, reminding us of the sustenance and eternal life that only Jesus can offer. Today, we will explore what it means for Jesus to be the bread of life and how this truth impacts our daily lives.

Jesus begins by stating, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life." Here, faith does not mean mere intellectual agreement, but a deep, personal trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is an ongoing relationship that transforms our hearts and minds, aligning us with God's will. Faith is the key that opens the gift of eternal life, a life that transcends the physical and touches the eternal.

I thought back to when I entered Yale Divinity School in New Haven in 2002. Students entering the seminary often come with a firm belief in God, but their faith wavers during the course of their studies. Many of them come to the seminary with a firm belief in the factual reliability of the Bible and a deep commitment to Jesus as God's revelation. However, as you know, the Bible was not written directly by God and given to human. It was written by hundreds of people over the centuries. Of course, it was not written by just anyone, but by people who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, seminary students often get confused while looking at the Bible through literary criticism, learning systematic theology, and learning history. I went through a similar process, but the more I studied theology, the more I experienced the presence of God, which made me more confident.

What startled and surprised and has since sustained me was the increasing conviction how Jesus represented God; makes God present among us. We came to church on Sunday because Jesus has the words of eternal life. It is not because Jesus is the most educated person in the world, nor because he has

the most humor, nor because he is the one who performs the greatest miracles or shows. In the Gospel of John, eternal life means not only life beyond death, but also real life, full life, abundant life, fulfilling life right here and right now.

2. In verse 48 Jesus declares, "I am the bread of life." Bread, in the ancient world, was the staple of daily sustenance. It was essential for survival, much like how food is today. By calling Himself the bread of life, Jesus is emphasizing that He is essential for our spiritual survival. Just as bread nourishes our physical bodies, Jesus nourishes our souls. He is the source of life, and without Him, we cannot truly live.

Jesus then draws a contrast between the manna that the Israelites ate in the wilderness and the bread He offers. Manna was a miraculous provision from God, but it was temporary. Those who ate it eventually died. In contrast, the bread that Jesus offers is eternal. In verse 50, "This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die." Jesus is highlighting the difference between temporary, earthly sustenance and the eternal, heavenly sustenance He provides.

In verse 51 Jesus reveals the depth of His sacrifice: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." The bread of life is not just a metaphor; it points to the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. His body, broken for us, is the true bread that brings eternal life. By partaking in this bread—by believing in His sacrifice and resurrection—and by participating in the Lord's ministry, we are united with Christ and receive the promise of eternal life.

A terrible thing happened to this man who held the words of eternal life. He was arrested, found guilty, and executed in an extremely painful and shameful way. Perhaps he had foreseen this, but no one seemed to take it seriously, so his followers were stunned when he died on the cross. How could the one who

had given them life be subjected to death? What was God's plan? In search of answers, they turned to the Old Testament, seeking verses that could help them make sense of how Jesus' suffering might be a manifestation of God's goodness. The prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Jesus is not only the Lord of good days and prosperous times. In Jesus Christ, God is with us in the most difficult times, when life is painful and fearful. As the prophet Isaiah said, He took upon Himself our sufferings. There is no place we can go where Jesus does not go with us: Neither pain, nor loss, nor even death, nor the shadow of death, can separate you from the love of Christ.

3.How do we partake in the bread of life today? Of course, it could be participating in Holy Communion on the first Sunday of every month. But that's not all. We do so through faith, by continually turning to Jesus for our spiritual nourishment including but not limited to the following. Just as we need food daily, we need to feed on Christ daily through prayer, reading His Word, and living in fellowship with Him. You can ask for God's guidance at the beginning of each day. You can read the Bible every day and understand the meaning of its words. In that way, you can experience God's presence in a way that suits your situation. This is not a one-time event but a lifelong journey of faith and reliance on Him.

Prof. Steve Hayner, former President of Columbia Seminary, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, and the prognosis was not good. During these few months Steve posted his reflections on the web. One day he shared about what it means to trust in the God who in Jesus Christ is with us in our suffering and our death.

"Unfortunately in our culture, there is still a kind of shame connected with depression, as if we should never experience it. And after all, I'm the guy who

signs every letter with “joyfully.” But joy is dependent on who I am and how I am loved more than on my circumstances. It is happiness that takes the hit when circumstances go bad. Not joy. Our circumstances are just too variable to be the foundation of our daily feelings about life. It’s way too easy to equate “blessing” with circumstances instead of with God’s loving embrace!”

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, Jesus, the bread of life, offers us something that nothing else in this world can: eternal life. His words in John 6:47-51 challenge us to examine where we are and where we find our sustenance. Are we feeding on the temporary "manna" of this world, or are we seeking the eternal nourishment that only Christ can provide? As we leave here today, let us remember that Jesus is the true bread of our lives, not in ideas and philosophies, but in your everyday life. Let us partake in Him daily, trusting in His sacrifice and embracing the eternal life He freely gives. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.