

## **Jesus declared, “I Am the Bread of Life”**

John 6:22-40

Key verse: 35 “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’”

In today’s passage, Jesus talks a lot about food: food that spoils versus food that endures to eternal life, the bread of God, the true bread that comes down from heaven and lastly, the bread of life. Why so much food? Because Jesus knew the bread-obsessed crowds were hungry. But Jesus didn’t give them the bread they wanted. Instead, Jesus wanted to give them something far better, food that gives an amazing life to the full; Food, that leaves your heart and soul fully satisfied and content, not just until dinner time.

Do you have such an amazing life of overflowing fullness? Do you even wonder if such a life of fullness and satisfaction is truly possible on earth? And if so, do you wonder how can we have it? Today, let’s come to Jesus hungry, not just for bread that makes us hungry again, but hungry for the true bread of life. And through him, let’s taste and enjoy a life to the full.

### **I. The crowd’s eager search to find Jesus, the bread-making king (22-24)**

Today’s story begins with the crowd that had eaten Jesus’ bread and fish to the full. While suffering from food-coma, the crowd saw his disciples going somewhere by boat while Jesus went up a mountain alone. The next day upon waking up, they realized that Jesus and his disciples were gone like the wind as they slept off their bread and fish.

While talking about what to do next, they saw some boats from Tiberias landing where they were. They ran into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus (24b). They knew exactly where to go in search of Jesus. So they furiously rowed with battle speed, like in the movie Ben Hur. Upon arriving in Capernaum, they also knew Jesus’ custom, and went straight to the synagogue (Lk 4:16). Out of breath and exhausted from their search, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” What an impressive crowd it was, so diligent in their eagerness to find Jesus!

Apostle John, however, had already commented that though they had recognized Jesus as the Prophet prophesied by Moses (Dt 18:15), they wanted to make him king by force. They wanted him to be their personal magical Genie. For the first time, the poor and hungry people went to bed with their stomachs full, because of Jesus. So they decided, “If only we make Jesus our king, we will never be hungry again. Jesus will satisfy my physical wants and needs always. Then I will be happy.” This need made them see Jesus as the Messiah they wanted him to be - as their personal bread-maker. So they pursued after Jesus like a skillful hunter. Now let’s see how Jesus’ conversation with them went.

## II. The work of God is this; to believe in the one he has sent (25-34).

Upon hearing their greetings, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” What did Jesus say to them? Look at verse 26. **“Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.’”**

When Jesus had first seen the crowds the day before, he demonstrated his care for them. He had welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing (Lk 9:11). Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He fed them to the full. He knew all of their needs even before they knew them.

So now as the one who cares for them, he began to challenge them. Let’s read verse 27. **“Do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”**

What was the food that the crowd had worked for up to that point? From the immediate context, they had worked hard to find Jesus, to make him their bread-making messiah. Ultimately, they worked hard to fill their own stomachs, to fill their own hunger, their desperate needs. **Jesus also asks us: “Why do you chase after me? What do you really want from me? What is the food that you seek?”**

Now Jesus didn’t give in to their demands. Rather he said, “Do not work for that food.” Why? Because it spoils. Do you think your mom and dad will give you spoiled food if you insist on it? No, because spoiled food will give you food poisoning! So all the food that we work for: education, success, security, marriage, wealth will spoil and give us food poisoning and eventually end in death!

What then is the food that Jesus wanted them to work for? Look at verse 27 again. **“Do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”** Jesus wants to give us the best food. What are the two criteria for the good food Jesus introduces to us? Firstly, it endures to eternal life. Secondly, it is the food that only the Son of Man will/can give. For he alone is the one who is qualified, able and willing to give this bread to us.

Upon hearing Jesus’ exaltation in verse 27, how did the crowd respond to him? Look at verse 28. **“Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God required?’”** Isn’t it interesting that the crowd picked up on only one word, “work?” They were absolutely sure that they could do all the work God might require for them to earn that bread! Aren’t we also sure that the bread that satisfies us is something that can and must be earned, by our hard work and efforts?

Now let's read verse 29 together. **“Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this; to believe in the one he has sent.’”** Let's look at this verse more carefully. The crowd asked about *“the works”* they should do. Jesus answered, *“the work of God.”* What does “work of God imply? It implies *the work God* himself has done. It implies that there is no human work or effort that can ever earn the bread that endures to eternal life. In truth, on our own, all our efforts are in vain to fill the hunger that we have within us. We are unable, inadequate, and insufficient- sorry to say. Therefore, because we are unable to work for bread that lasts to eternal life, because all our greatest efforts eventually spoil and end in the grave, God alone sent his one and only Son into the world, out of his one-sided and undeserved grace and love (3:16). God sent Jesus, who has revealed God's love and fullness as he truly is. So, what is the work we must do? It is simply to believe in the one God has sent, Jesus, the Son of God, who loves us and saves us because we are inadequate to do so. This is the work of God, to believe in this Jesus, whom God has sent.

When we believe, what truly matters is the object of your faith. If the object of your trust is wrong, it doesn't matter how hard or how sincerely you believe. What does your messiah look like? Is he the Son of God, the true bread of life from heaven? Or is he a custom-made Messiah based on our own imagination and desires? In John 8:24, Jesus said, **“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”** What a dreadful thing it is that unless we believe in Jesus as he claims to be, we will hear him saying, “I do not know you!”

Some of us may be scared thinking “What if the Jesus whom I have believed in is different from the one God has sent? What shall I do?” Even when the crowd came to Jesus with a wrong motive and a distorted concept of the Messiah, Jesus was more than willing to converse in order to teach them the right view of who he is. Jesus is very good at correcting, rebuking and challenging us in love. So come to Jesus as you are and listen to him through his words. Let them open your eyes, correct your wrong thinking, and then work to believe in this Jesus that is revealed through His words through daily repentance of our wrong custom-made Messiahs.

While conversing with Jesus, the crowd revealed their true colors. Look at verses 30-31. **“So they asked him, ‘What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”** They knew that Jesus was not talking about physical food. But they kept pushing their own agenda. To them, Moses was a great prophet, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, gave them the law, and fed the entire nation with manna for 40 years, over 14,000 times. In contrast, Jesus fed 5,000 men just once. Therefore, they demanded that Jesus give them more and bigger signs to prove himself. They tried to manipulate him, trying to get him to feed them again and again.

How did Jesus answer them? Look at verses 32-33. **“Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, it is my Father**

**who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”** Jesus was not mad at them. Instead, he shared the truth with them. Jesus said it is not Moses but God the Father who gives to them the true bread from heaven. Neither the manna nor the law of Moses were the true bread from heaven. Rather, the manna was simply a shadow of the true bread from heaven. It gave them physical fullness for a short while. It pointed to the complete fullness of their entire beings that comes through the bread from heaven. Even the law of Moses simply points to the bread of God that *comes* down from heaven and *gives* life to the world.

Before we move on, let’s put all the characteristics of the good food/ the bread of God and contrast them to those of just food.

<b>The bread of God</b>	<b>Just food</b>
It endures to eternal life (27).	It (spoils).
The God the Father will give it (27).	( ) will give it.
It is the true bread from heaven (33).	It is ( ) bread from ( ).
It gives life to the world (33).	It gives ( ) to ( )
It is the living bread (51).	It is the ( ) bread.

(Replace all the “it” with Jesus.)

(Fill in with your blanks)

How did the crowd respond to Jesus’ words? Look at verse 34. **“Sir,’ they said, ‘always give us this bread.’”** Like the crowd, do you want to always have that bread?

### III. Jesus is the bread of life (35-40)

After correcting their wrong desire, Jesus made a bold declaration. Let’s read verse 35 together. **“Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’”** Here let’s focus on two things.

Firstly, *Jesus is* the bread of life. Jesus said, “I am.” He did not say “I will be” nor “I will lead you to the bread of life.” He solemnly declared, “I am the bread of life,” just as God said to Moses from the burning bush, “I am who I am.” Jesus plainly identifies himself as the very Incarnate God. “I am” means “self-existing,” and “self-sufficient.” He proclaimed, “I’m not just your bread-maker, who exists to meet your physical needs. Rather, I am God almighty, who is the ultimate Sustainer of life. I am the bread that you alone need to have the Zoe life, that is eternal, overflowing, real and genuine, vigorous, active and rich.”

On the other hand, we are all created and dependent. You can be independent of your parents, but you cannot independent of God. If God stops providing air, water, etc., you

stop from existing. It's easy for us to think that we are self-sufficient and can find satisfaction and fullness if we have good jobs, families, friends, video-games and all kinds of entertainment. But paradoxically that we need these things reveals that we are not self-sufficient. The truth is that all these things only take away our hunger for a short time, and maybe in just one dimension. We have all experienced some fullness and joys. There is great physical and emotional satisfaction of a good steak, a sense of fullness through wonderful friendships and relationships, or even thrilling excitement in watching an awesome movie or sports championships, and a joy that comes from meaningful jobs. But the problem is, these are but short-lived tastes that leave us hungry and empty tomorrow.

Many people in the developed world who have gotten everything still say, "I am depressed." Recently, several rich and famous people have committed suicide. And have you ever felt a sense of emptiness or despair or boredom or dissatisfaction with your life when you have gotten what you wanted? If so, it is simply because we were created to become truly human only by having Jesus. Jesus declares to the world, "I am the bread of life." He is the only bread of Life that satisfies us each day, to eternity. He satisfies my soul to the full. He gives me life to the full.

**So how can I enjoy this life to the full?** We must believe in Jesus the bread of life in the present tense, today, in our daily life and with every aspect of our lives. Each moment we turn away from other foods, snacks and spoiled foods that cannot permanently satisfy and just take away our hunger to the true Bread of Life. And daily we do the hard work of God which is to turn to him in every circumstance and situation, **"to believe in the one he has sent."** Are you daily doing the work of God, and turning to him, in faith and full trust that he is enough to satisfy you?

Since my two brain surgeries three years ago, I have double vision and constant numbness and pain on the left side of my face. I thought that if only my health gets better, everything would be ok. In my daily life I have had many complaints, worries and angers not related to my health. However, while listening to Jesus through his conversations with the crowd, I felt as if Jesus was questioning me saying, "Are you doing the work of God?" and "Do you believe in me as the Bread of life? Or "Are you chasing some other bread?" I was cut to the heart.

Through prayers, several spoiling foods that I have eaten for many years were exposed and have been removed. One is my confidence in myself, in my health and smart mind. So when my health and memory failed me, I became terribly frustrated. I also based my worth on the ministry and my children's spiritual and academic success. While repenting of my sins by remembering Jesus' death and resurrection, these idols of mine were cut out of my heart like my brain tumor was removed. By his grace, I am learning to believe in Jesus as the bread of life based on Galatians 2:20, which states, **"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."** How could I know that it is in my weakness and sickness that I can know and live with

Jesus much better? His comfort, encouragement, fellowship, hope of eternity and resurrection body have become so real to me. I confess now that it is a greater blessing to live in and through Jesus and by his power in my weakness than to live with a healthy body and pride without my Lord Jesus Christ. I praise God who has given me a better food and better healing and better blessing - Jesus Christ. I am very thankful to Jesus who has engaged in a “sanctifying conversation” with me day after day. Lord Jesus, sanctify me with the truth until you alone, the bread of life can be everything to me. Amen. In the same way may Jesus, the bread of life be with each of you until you can have a life to the full.

Secondly, Jesus’ open invitation. Jesus knows about the spiritual condition of people then and now, who are very near-sighted and pragmatic. Thus, he opens his arms wide and invites all of us saying, **“Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”**

Jesus’ open invitation echoes Isaiah 55:1-3, which say, **“Come, all you who are thirsty, 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 spend money on what is not bread, and why labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the riches of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.”** What a paradox it is that we can buy the very bread Jesus is talking about without money and without cost. It is because Jesus has already paid the price of it for us through his death and resurrection. This food Jesus is offering to us is closely related to his “everlasting covenant with you” and his “faithful love,” in our union with him. Each of us needs to come to him, to desire him, to take his words-- chew and digest them-- until our whole beings can find complete fulfillment.

Did the crowd believe in Jesus as the bread of life? No, they didn’t do the very work of God. Though they had seen his miracles and experienced his love, they would not believe in him as God had sent (36). Did their unbelief affect Jesus? Not at all! How was he not affected? In verse 37 Jesus said **“All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”** Jesus absolutely trusted in God the Father who draws people to him so that they can look to the Son and believe in Him. He truly believed God’s sovereignty and zeal in carrying out his will to save sinners. Thus, he decided to keep obeying God’s will by revealing himself as the one he had sent until he would say on the cross, “It is finished.”

As Jesus keeps revealing himself as the one God has sent, may the Holy Spirit strengthen our inner person to believe in the one he has sent: the Bread of life. May the Holy Spirit enable us to feed on Jesus, the Bread of life daily and moment by moment in our pilgrimage. Our Savior Jesus, we yearn for the complete and perfect fullness in and through you in heaven forever! Amen.