

## Fully Satisfied

### John 6:25-51

*Bryn MacPhail / Feb. 6, 2011*

Throughout the Gospels, we witness Jesus making a variety of bold claims about who He is and what He has come to do. Among these bold claims, perhaps none are more curious than this claim to be **“the bread of life”**.

Having recently announced to the Samaritan woman at the well that He is the promised Messiah (4:26), Jesus now identifies Himself with a commonly used food item—*bread*.

With the wide variety of carbohydrates that are available today, I confess that I do not eat very much bread anymore. I do, however, remember a time when bread was a primary component of my meals.

As a child I spent a great deal of time with my grandparents on their fruit farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. My grandparent’s lunch table was a simple one, and I vividly remember that every meal was accompanied by a very tall stack of bread slices.

Frankly, I did not find the idea of filling up on bread slices particularly appealing, but I soon learned that if I did not eat the bread I would suffer in the afternoon.

You see, after lunch, I was expected to continue working on the farm. I quickly learned that a cup of soup and a dill pickle was not sufficient to fuel an afternoon's labour.

The stack of bread slices was on the table for good reason—we needed that bread if we were to succeed in getting the work done.

My understanding is that, in the ancient world, bread was even more necessary.

In Jesus' day, bread often constituted the entire meal. As such, people needed bread—not simply to energize their work, but they needed bread to stay alive!

In other words, for the people of Jesus' day, *bread was something that they could not live without.*

This helps to explain the prominent role of bread within our biblical text. When Jesus multiplied the loaves, He was not providing a mid-day snack for a group of curious onlookers—He was providing them with their physical nourishment for the day!

This also helps us to understand why the multitudes continued following Jesus after He fed them bread.

The people were so amazed at the multiplication of the loaves that they travelled across the Sea of Galilee in small boats in order to keep up with Jesus (6:24).

Jesus senses their skewed motivation for following Him, and responds by challenging the multitude to pursue a superior kind of bread and a superior kind of nourishment.

Jesus points the people to "**the bread of God...which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world**"(6:33).

Jesus goes on to say: "**I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and He who believes in Me shall never thirst**"(6:35).

There is much for us to unpack here.

The first thing we can say is quite general, and perhaps obvious, but is nonetheless worth noting. By referring to Himself as "**bread**" Jesus is conveying to us that He is something we cannot live without.

I think it is also important to observe that Jesus does not offer His followers *resources* as much as He offers *Himself*.

Jesus does not say, "I *have* the bread of life"—He says, "**I *am* the bread of life**".

I am reminded of the story of a minister who was talking to a married couple who were having difficulties.

The couple was shackled by mutual bitterness and a lack of understanding. At one point in the meeting, the husband spoke up in

obvious exasperation, ‘I’ve given you everything’, he said to his wife. ‘I’ve given you a new home. I’ve given you a new car. I’ve given you a new fur coat. I’ve given you . . .’, and the list went on.

When the husband had finished speaking, his wife responded in a very quiet tone, ‘That much is true—you have given me everything . . . except yourself.’

When we look at Jesus, we see that God has given us the very best—He has given us Himself.

We should also note *the quality* of what is being offered here. We’re told that what we receive from Jesus has *eternal value*.

With this bread from "**heaven**" Jesus promises that we will never hunger again.

Jesus is offering the best kind of nourishment we could hope for—He is offering perpetual nourishment for our soul.

Is that not something we all long for?

Listen again to John 6:27 and let the words of Jesus soak in a little bit:  
**“Do not work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”**

Now, I know what some of you are thinking because I’m thinking exactly that same thing—a person has to work for a living.

We need actual food to survive. We need some kind of shelter. Many of us have a mortgage to pay, and children to look after.

“With all due respect Lord, we need to work for the food that spoils.”

In the context of the entire Bible, we can be confident that Jesus isn't commanding us all to quit our jobs so we can sit around all day and pray.

In the context of the entire Bible, I do, however, hear Jesus challenging our *priorities*.

I hear Jesus saying, “Don't *prioritize* working for food that spoils (don't prioritize working for money; don't prioritize working for the praise of others), but rather *prioritize* seeking (Me!) the food that endures to eternal life.”

Jesus is reminding us that worldly things will only satisfy us for a season.

Our need for ultimate satisfaction cannot be met by what the world offers.

Our need for ultimate satisfaction cannot be achieved by our career, it cannot be gained by our bank balance, by our reputation, or even by our spouse or by our children.

As Augustine has said, we have *a God-sized void* within us and “our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

Our hunger can only be satisfied by a relationship with Jesus Christ.

What remains for our attention this morning then is how we appropriate these benefits. How do we get some of this living bread?

Jesus tells us in verse 35. There is something for us to do if we are to benefit from the bread of life. Jesus says we must "**come to (Him)**". Moreover, He says we must "**believe in Him.**"

The Greek word for "**believe**" that is used here means "**to entrust**" or "**to put one's faith in**". To believe then, involves more than agreeing with a body of information.

Belief, in the sense of the word used by Jesus, is *active*.

Where genuine belief exists, a corresponding action should follow.

A helpful illustration of this comes from an account from the late 1890's, when a famous tightrope walker strung a wire across Niagara Falls. As 10,000 people watched, the tightrope walker inched his way along the wire from one side of the Falls to the other.

When he got to the other side, the crowd cheered wildly. Finally, the tightrope walker was able to quiet the crowd and shouted to them, 'Do you believe in me?'

The crowd shouted back, 'We believe! We believe!'

Again he quieted the crowd and shouted to them, 'I'm going back across the tightrope but this time I'm going to carry someone on my back. Do you believe I can do that?'

The crowd yelled back, 'We believe! We believe!'

He quieted the crowd one more time and then asked them, 'Who will be that person?'

The crowd suddenly became silent. Not a single person was willing to act upon the very truth they professed to believe in.

I fear that there are many within the Christian Church today who are like those cheering spectators.

Jesus says, 'I am the Christ', and we shout, 'We believe! We believe!'

Jesus says, 'I am the bread of life', and again we shout, 'We believe! We believe!'

But then Jesus challenges us to act upon our belief and suddenly we hesitate.

Jesus calls us to taste of the bread of life, but we're reluctant.

I remember what I was like as a young child trying new foods. I was quite happy eating a rotation of Kraft Dinner, hamburgers, and hot dogs for dinner.

As a result, for years my family would filet mignon while I ate my hamburger.

I was sure that my hamburger was the best tasting thing ever...that is until I tried filet mignon.

I immediately felt foolish. All those years I had been insisting on 2<sup>nd</sup> rate ground beef on a bun because I had no idea how good filet mignon tasted.

It is not enough to know some things about Jesus.

It is not enough to have read about Jesus, or to have heard sermons about Him.

If we are to ever experience lasting satisfaction we must taste the bread of heaven for ourselves.

In the ancient world, if you didn't have bread and water, you would die. And so by choosing these images Jesus was claiming to be the One whom men and women could not live without.

I'm also mindful that, in Jesus' day, bread would have been eaten every day.



In The Lord's Prayer we pray, "**Give us this day our *daily* bread.**"

Could it be that when Jesus identifies Himself as "**the bread of life**" He means to convey that He is to be pursued daily?

And how do we pursue Jesus?

We pursue Him *in prayer*.

We pursue Him *in the Scriptures*.

We pursue Him *in services of worship*.

We pursue Him *in Christian fellowship*.

I sometimes hear people say that they come to church to charge their batteries for the week.

Would it surprise you to hear me say that I have preached most every Sunday for the last 13 years and not once has a Sunday morning worship service charged my batteries for the week.

My experience is that a service of worship accompanied by God's Spirit will give us grace and strength for the day—not for the week.

Maybe word has already gotten around: I'm one of those persons who loves an all-you-can-eat buffet. I'm the guy who prides himself on filling 5 or 6 plates.

Afterwards, I imagine that I won't need to eat food ever again. I'm so full it hurts.

And then, inevitably, I'm hungry in the morning.

Friends, I am so pleased you have chosen to be here today. My prayer is that what you are hearing and experiencing is helping to satisfy your soul.

I expect that your participation in the Lord's Supper will help to fill you up spiritually.

But I also hear Jesus saying what my experience confirms: *we need spiritual nourishment every day.*

You will be hungry in the morning.

I urge you then, pursue Jesus Christ every single day.

He is the bread of life. He is the One who can truly satisfy your soul.