

Sandwiches

August 5, 2012

John 6: 24-35

24 Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 26 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." 30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " 32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

I love summer. It's not because of the heat, that's for sure. I enjoy the river and the beach. I like my vacations. My yard really looks great in the summer with all the flowers in full bloom, the fresh cut grass, the driveway and walks edged, and everything neatly trimmed. But those aren't the real reason I love summer. No, the real reason is tomato sandwiches. You can't get a real tomato sandwich any other time. It has to be in the summer. Man, there isn't much that can beat a tomato sandwich; home grown, fresh picked from the garden, sliced thick, laid just right on a slice of bread with mayo, salt and pepper. You want a real treat, add lettuce and bacon. Now, there you have it, the BLT, you don't get much better. Everyone likes their tomato sandwich just a little different. I know some people who, now this is a sacrilege, but I know some people who ruin their sandwich by using, ugh, Miracle Whip. Can you believe it, Miracle Whip? Oh well, as momma used to say, each to his own said the old lady as she kissed the cow. But you know what really makes a tomato sandwich, the bread. Everyone likes theirs a little different; some like white, others prefer wheat. Some like rye and others prefer pumpernickel. It really doesn't make any difference; it boils down to what you like. I guess that holds true for any sandwich. The key ingredient is the bread. You ever tried to have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich without the bread. Don't you sort of wind up with peanut butter in one hand and jelly in the other? If you're going to have a sandwich, you have to have bread. Go to any sandwich shop and order your favorite sandwich. What's the first question they ask, what kind of bread you want that on? Bread; throughout history, it's one of the items that has remained constant. It doesn't make any difference what culture you study, what ethnicity someone is, the common bond that holds each of us together is bread. What grain do you use for your bread, wheat, rye, corn, rice, barley?

For several weeks, we studied the Gospel of Mark. During the scripture reading one Sunday, I skipped over a section. I think I explained that one story that I skipped was the feeding of the 5,000 and the other was of Jesus walking on the water. This morning we are in the Gospel of John and we are at that same point. Jesus has just fed the 5,000. He and the disciples needing rest left and went across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. That is where we pick up this morning's scripture lesson. Jesus had just finished feeding 5,000 with five **loaves** and two fish. Humm, there's that bread thing again. Actually that **bread thing** is what this lesson is all about. The people came looking for Jesus for more bread. This time, Jesus called their hand. You're just looking for a free handout. That shouldn't be why you are here. You need to be looking for something more fulfilling. Listen to verse 26 and 27: **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."** 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.** Look for something more fulfilling; I used the term fulfilling for a specific purpose. It is the key to this passage. It's very easy to get your fill at the table. We are more than blessed. I dare say that there is not a single person in this congregation that is concerned with where their next meal is coming from. If anything, we're more concerned with eating too much. But that only last until the next meal. Then we're ready to go again. I don't, however, know of a single restaurant where you can go and eat until you are fulfilled. That is the point Jesus was trying to make. There is a major difference between full and fulfilled. You can't eat your way to fulfilled. I think we all know that. So, we seek fulfillment. How and where do we seek it? And maybe a better question, what are we seeking? Oft times we look for better clothes, or a nicer car, or a bigger house, or more toys, or more, or bigger, or better whatever. Some look for power while others seek control. Some are looking for anything so they turn to drugs or alcohol. People want fulfillment. Jesus is trying to explain to the people that they can find fulfillment through him. He is telling us the same thing. Listen to verses 28 and 29: **Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."** Wow how simple. Jesus just told the people, you want eternity, you want to be truly filled with the holy spirit, believe in me. It's that simple, if you want eternity, believe in Jesus.

But that is where the simple ends and the tough part begins. Once you say I believe in Jesus Christ: I believe he was the son of God: I believe he was crucified on the cross and died: I believe that on the third day he rose from the dead: and that by believing in him I will have life everlasting, once you say that and truly believe that with all your heart, soul and mind, then your life will be changed forever. It is easy to say, it's not easy to do. Once you say that, you take on a responsibility. You take on the responsibility to do everything in your power to live a more Christ-like life. Now, what do I mean a more Christ-like life; let me give you a couple of examples. Jesus came as a servant. To live a more Christ-like life, then we too must become servants. We have an awesome Children's Worship and Wonder program downstairs each Sunday morning. The ladies who are working in that program are being servants to our children. They are giving of their time, their energy; they are sacrificing their own worship time here in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings to serve our children. Speak to any one of them; they can testify about fulfillment. I dare say each one of them is getting more fulfillment out of serving the children than they would get sitting here listening to me. Those ladies are teaching the word of God to our children. Those ladies are laying the foundation for the Christian beliefs of those

children. And it is a belief system that will be with those children for the rest of their lives. Jesus Christ said suffer the little children to come unto me. I would say teaching our children is living a Christ-like life. That's not to say that we all need to be downstairs teaching Worship and Wonder. We don't. Each of us has been given gifts. Yours may not be to work with small children. I know that is not one of my gifts. One of my gifts is to be able to stand in front of a group, of people and talk. I did it for thirty years as a teacher, both on the high school level and on the college level. As a Christian, I felt it was my Christian responsibility to step up and offer to pastor this church until we could find an intentional interim. I don't have a problem standing up here each Sunday morning and speaking. It does however, stretch me to come up with what I think is the right message to deliver. Saying it is easy, writing it is tough. At the same time, we don't need 60 people in the pulpit here every Sunday morning. Last Sunday we had a group of people step forward and be installed as Elders, Deacons, and board officers. I believe each of these people will use part of the gifts that God has given them to serve this church in a Christ-like manner. I spoke briefly about the gifts each of us have been given. As Christians, I believe it is our responsibility to find what each of our gifts are and then use those gifts in the service of the Lord. Saying "I believe" is easy, living "I believe" is tough. But living I believe is fulfilling. I have truly been fulfilled while I have been in the pulpit here. I believe each of the persons installed last week will receive fulfillment as they serve this church.

It is easy to say I believe. It takes a real leap of faith to actually believe. Sometimes I think we, and I'm counting myself in this generic "we", but sometimes I think we are a lot like the people in today's scripture lesson. Listen to verses 30 and 31: **So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"** The people still wanted proof. Show us, what can you do? Our ancestors had proof, we want it too. Wait a minute, was that the people in Jesus' time, or is that us? We know the stories, we've read the book. We know how it's supposed to end, we know what we're supposed to do, yet we ask for proof. Before I really invest in this belief thing, show me something. Prove to me...

Verse 32: **Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**

All too, often, as humans we each want proof. Is the eye hot on the stove hot or is the iron hot enough to get the wrinkles out of the shirt. What do we do; we touch it. We want the proof. We can each think of something that we've done in order to get proof that yep, that's it. But that's not how God works. There is no tangible proof. You can't touch God, or see God, or hear him or smell him. There is evidence all around, but no real proof. We just have to have faith, we have to believe. In verse 35 we read; **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."**

Fulfillment, there is only one real way to get it. Welcome to Hooker Memorial Sandwich Shop. What kind of bread would you like today?