

The Wonder Bread from Heaven Filling Souls Not Bellies

John 6:24-35 ²⁴ when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. ²⁵ And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" ²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." ²⁸ Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." ³⁰ Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? ³¹ "Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" ³² Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father 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 Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." ³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

Some twisty things are good, like rope and twizzlers others are not so good. In our text everything that Jesus says the Jews attempt to twist it back to earthly things. Every time the Jews try to twist it back to the earthly, Jesus attempts to call them on to the heavenly. Jesus wants us to partake of the heavenly bread not just the earthly.

John 6:26 I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

They sought him in order to be filled with earthly bread. Many still seek Jesus to be filled with earthly bread. Many people will say, what use do I have for a God who only talks about heaven and does not take care about me now on this earth.

It is true that Jesus only wants to speak about heavenly bread and not earthly bread in our text. But not because he doesn't want us to have earthly bread but because it is already given. God has already given

to men all that we need for this body and life. In Genesis chapter 2 he gives to men all that we need for this bodily life. Earlier in this same chapter of John Jesus feeds the five thousand with five loaves. He has already filled them with every good earthly thing/

It is not God who fails to give. It is man who is not content with what God has given and does not recognize what God has done. It is man who misuses, abuses, and destroys God's gifts. It is always the glory of God to give first, before we even ask

Jesus does not preach about earthly goods nor is he concerned with giving food, that has already been given. If he does miracle it is not because they are necessary but in order that we might see with our own eyes the truth that he is the one who gave it to begin with.

He originally gave wine, and food, and sight. Those miracles in which gives more are only a reminder of what he has already done. When he healed the blind man that was not primarily for the blind man's sake but for ours that we might learn to give thanks for what we have. The bread on the mountain was not primarily for their sake but for us that we might learn where our bread comes from and give thanks to God for it.

God could dole out his blessings slowly and only when we ask and only to those who recognize the truth about him. Such would no doubt be the attitude if a man like one of us were in the place of God. However it is not in the nature of God to withhold his gifts, but rather to give and give freely. The earthly gifts of God have been given freely already. This is not what Christ came to do, but to give freely of the spiritual gifts of God.

Therefore, Jesus does not speak about bread here because he knows that such things have already been freely given. His job was not to repeat what God did at the creation of the world, ie to freely give earthly blessings but rather to freely give heavenly bread.

John 6:28 "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

At first this might sound like a good thing. But they are not asking how they can do good works. They are not asking how they can do what is right in God's eyes. By works of God they are speaking of the miracles which Jesus did. They want to know how they can feed 5,000 with five loaves. They wanted the power so that they could get what they wanted. They asked about the works of God so that they could manipulate God to get what they wanted.

I went fly fishing one and only one time. A friend of mine took me. I ask him how I was doing. He told me flat out that I was terrible.

"I wish we were in South Dakota then every time you cast correctly you would catch a fish and would learn the right way."

There are too many Christians who treat prayer and faith in the same way as fly fishing in SD. If we do it right we will get what we want. James warns against this attitude .

James 4:3 ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

God is not a Genie in a bottle. He is not a vending machine. He is not a fish in a brook, to think that if you do something in the right way, with the right faith or the right words he will magically dispense exactly what you want is idolatry. You are not trusting God but trying to manipulate him.

God is so much more than a vending machine. He doesn't simply dispense what we demand from him but calls us on to better things. In our text Jesus wants the Jews to have more than earthly bread. He wants them to have heavenly bread. He wants more than to fill their bellies. He wants to fill their souls.

John 6:30-31 ³⁰ Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? ³¹ "Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

They wanted a prophet who would give them earthly blessings and so do many people today. Many people want preachers who do not preach to them about heavenly things but about earthly things, about money and marriage, and children, about politics and social justice.

To be sure God's word has much to say about these subjects. To be sure we need to hear about them sometimes. But God's word also has something so much better and so much more to offer us. The heavenly bread who came down from heaven.

If we were perfect we would have no use for the law or practical earthly advice. If we were perfect we would not need these things but we would still love to hear the word of God as it speaks of the wonderful things that Jesus did.

This is what the angels do. They delight to look into these things.

1 Peter 1:12 ¹² **To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things which angels desire to look into**

This is the purpose of the Holy Spirit.

John 15:26 ²⁶ **"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.**

The Jews demand from Jesus gives us something practical something earthly or we have no use for you. But Jesus wanted to give them something greater, something more than mere earthly advice.

They only wanted preaching that would give them something. But others and I think this is many of you would gladly give of your earthly possessions to receive true preaching of the Word. They wanted earthly bread, but we are happy to give earthly bread to receive heavenly instead.

On the one hand there are those who do not care one wit for any preaching or any prophet that does not give them earthly blessings, on the other hand there are many who would give up all manner of earthly blessings in order to receive the heavenly bread which Christ offers.

And yet we do not need to give up anything to receive Christ and the heavenly bread he has come to bring. His gifts are freely given to all without price.

John 6:35 I am the bread of life.

Why do we come to Jesus?

Not to fill our bellies – God does indeed fill our bellies with every good thing. But he does this normally through natural means not through Christ. He does it for those who believe and for those who do not believe.

Not to get what we want – God does indeed give us everything good thing. But not because we manipulate him but because he is good. He does not give us everything that we in our sinfulness desire but what he knows is best for us.

Not to hear the things about ourselves but to hear about Christ.

Why do we come to Jesus? To receive the bread of life, that is to say the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Rather than coming to Jesus seeking only earthly blessings from him, how much more would we rather not give up all earthly blessings to have this spiritual bread which he offers? And yet there is nothing which we need to give up, but instead the Father has already freely blessed us with all earthly blessings and now in Christ has also freely given us all heavenly blessings, even the bread from heaven. Rather than trying to twist God's word around to be what we want it to be, we ought to receive with gladness the heavenly bread which he gives to us.

Amen