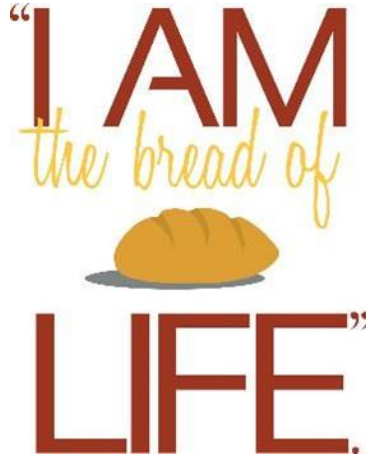


In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.



### Intro

Last week we began the first of four Sundays on the “Bread of Life” Discourse in the 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Gospel of John.

A familiar pattern in John is that Jesus does some miracle or healing – the Crowds misunderstand what it means – thus giving Jesus an opportunity for teaching – and so too with this chapter.

As we heard the last two weeks, Jesus has **fed the 5,000** and the People don't understand what it means and ask for a sign.

They said, “Moses fed our Ancestors with Manna in the Wilderness;” to which Jesus replies, *“Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

Then Jesus says, “I am the Bread of Life.”

So what does it mean when Jesus says, “**I** am the Bread of Life?”

### I. Bread of Life

A. In a very real sense, Jesus is stretching our imagery of Bread to new proportions.

1. Bread was a basic necessity in Jesus' day – without it you didn't eat.
2. Bread is the source of life, it sustains life;  
- without it life cannot go on.
3. And now Jesus takes this most basic thing – Bread – simple bread for eating and gives it a new meaning.
4. Jesus takes the **ordinary** and makes it **holy**.
5. He says, “I am the Bread of Life” – he is now the most basic thing – he is now the key to life – eternal life.
6. In other words, Jesus is saying “**I am the source of life.**”

B. And by LIFE, Jesus means something far more than mere physical existence – the you're born, you work, you die, kind of life.

1. Real life is a new relationship with God, a relationship, Jesus says, is based on God's call to us.

2. A relationship that is made possible through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; as he says, “the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

3. As Dr. William Barclay puts it: *“If Jesus is the essential of life, He may be described as the Bread of Life. The hunger of the human situation is ended when we know Christ and through him know God. The restless soul is at rest; the hungry heart is satisfied.”*

## II. In Relationship

A. Dr. Barclay goes on to say:

1. *“Real life is the new relationship with God, that relationship of trust and obedience and love of which we have already thought.*

2. *“That relationship is made possible only by Jesus Christ...*

3. *“That is to say, without Jesus there may be existence, but not life.”*

4. So the key to all of this goes back to RELATIONSHIP – relationship with God – made possible through Jesus – that is at the very core of our being.

5. Jesus is the Bread of Life; which means that he is essential for life, and he is essential for our relationship with God.

6. God WANTS to be in relationship with us – Jesus says so when he says, “No one can come to me unless the Father draws them.”

#### B. But how do WE respond to this relationship?

1. Do we act like the Jewish Leaders in the crowd – remember when John says “THE JEWS” he doesn’t mean all Jews but the Jewish Leaders who oppose Jesus.

2. Look how they react in the story – they think they have all the answers.

3. They think they KNOW who Jesus is – a Carpenter’s Son, and they think they KNOW what God is doing – God fed their Ancestors with Manna.

4. They think they know better than Jesus!

5. Do we ever act this way?

- Do WE ever think we know all the answers about who Jesus is and what God is doing?

- Do WE ever think we know it all and don’t have to listen to God?

6. Will we miss Jesus and miss out on this LIFE that only he can bring – New Life with God?

C. If we truly believe that Jesus is the Bread of Life – the Source, the nourishment of our lives – then we must look to him for that life-giving power.

1. Yet, so often, we are like those Israelites who ate the Manna in the Wilderness, and choose to wander around in the desert, **because we'd rather do it ourselves.**

2. And so we hunger – we hunger for wholeness within ourselves.

3. Rather than come to the Bread of Life, we'd rather wander in the wilderness of the “SELF HELP” section at the mega-bookstore or Amazon.com.

4. We hunger for a sense of COMMUNITY – but when we come to the Community of Faith, we'd rather spend our time in the desert of discontent waiting for someone else to step forward and do ministry;

- rather than gather at the Table as the Body of Christ and be strengthened by the Bread of Life to undertake a ministry of our own.

5. And so to distract ourselves we eat too much, drink too much, spend too much time on the computer, or anything else we can do to numb our emptiness and the insatiable hunger we feel;

- anything but come to the Bread of Life.

D. Yet to us and to all who are in need, Jesus comes again and again and again with open arms saying, “Come to me ... whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

1. And to those who DO come to him, who cast their troubles and their hungers on him, he DOES give everlasting life.

2. Jesus **IS** the **Bread of Life**; He **IS** the essential for life.

3. His offer is made to one and all, for each to consider as they choose.

4. To refuse the offer of Jesus is to allow our hungers to rule our lives, now and forever;

- but to accept His invitation is to find REAL LIFE in this world and in the life to come.

5. And when we come to the “Bread of Life” and accept his invitation – how do we live this out?

### III. Imitators of Christ

A. Saint Paul in our NT Lesson tells us exactly what we have to do – we must be **IMITATORS OF GOD**.

1. Paul writes: *“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*

2. Children are natural born imitators - that’s how they learn.

3. Adults imitate people too, whether they admit it or not,  
- usually it’s people they admire and identify with and want to be like.

4. As followers of Christ, we are called to imitate Christ – to be “Little Christs” – in other words, “Christians.”

B. And we, as Christians, are called to **imitate** God;

- We are to be and do what God does to and for us.

1. That’s the key to those long lists Paul is so fond of in the reading.

2. WE, like the Ephesians, are to conduct our lives in a manner pleasing to God that brings harmony to the body of Christ.

3. We are to put away bitterness, wrath, wrangling, slander, and malice.

4. And instead exhibit kindness and forgiveness to one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven us.

C. We are forgiven by God – therefore we are to live lives of forgiveness.

1. Whenever we are wronged, no matter how it hurts, we are to forgive.
2. For as long as we don't forgive – we are not being Imitators of God and OUR OWN relationship with God suffers.
3. We are loved by God – therefore we are to live in love, **as Christ loves us.**
4. That means a SACRIFICIAL love:
  - a love that's there all the time – not just when it's convenient
  - a love that's SEVEN days a week – not just Sundays
  - a love that's extended to ALL God's people – not just the ones who look like me, or act like me, or think like me, and live their lives like me.
  - a love that puts itself out for others.
5. And we are to imitate God's goodness:
  - All that we are, all that we have comes from God;
  - and we are called to share those gifts with the rest of God's family.
6. And remember, God doesn't ask us to do anything that God hasn't already done for us.

## Conclusion

For we too ARE a Community.

A community that, at its soul, believes that Jesus **IS** the Bread of Life – the source of our lives and the nourishment we need to live our lives as Imitators of God.

A community that believes we enter into a new relationship with God through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

A community called to share that special relationship with all those around us.

*“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ love us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*

### Let Us Pray

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN. (BCP p. 219)

