

Jesus – The Bread of Life  
Joh 6:24-35

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+BI A market research interviewer was stopping people in the grocery store after they picked up their bread. One fellow picked up a loaf of Wonder Bread and the man asked him, "Sir, would you be willing to answer a couple of questions about your choice of bread?" The man responded, "Yes, I'd be happy to."

"Fine," the man said. "The question I'd like to ask you is this: Do you feel that your choice of Wonder Bread has been at all influenced by their advertising program?" The fellow looked shocked and said, "Of course not. I'm not influenced by that sort of thing at all!"

"Well then," he said, "could you tell me just why you did choose Wonder Bread?" And he replied, "Of course I can! Because it builds strong bodies eight ways!"

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 366.

In Jesus' day people often felt fortunate just to have bread to survive, let alone anything fancy.

So at the middle of the Lord's prayer there is a request...

"Give us this day our daily bread"

I've just been reading Kenneth Bailey's comments on this line. He makes a number of points...

1. Bread is the staple diet of the middle east and as such is stands for all our food (physical needs?). But in our world of consumerism and greed it is a request for bread and not cake.

2. The word translated "daily" is *epiousias* (ἐπιούσιον) It doesn't occur anywhere else in Greek. Four translations have been suggested...

Today's bread  
Bread for tomorrow  
Just enough to survive  
The bread we need

Bailey came across an Old Syriac translation (close to the Arabic which Jesus spoke) and it uses the word "*ameno*" (which comes from the same root as Amen – truly) The Old Syriac word means...

"lasting, never-ceasing, never-ending, perpetual"

In other words...

**"Give us this day, the bread that doesn't run out"**

+ There is a story told of a home for deprived children, where they could not sleep and would cry out in the night. The man in charge of the place decided to give each child a piece of bread to put under their pillows. And in the knowledge that there was something for tomorrow he found that the children were able to sleep soundly.

We have lost something of that sense of need in our prosperous society.

+ It was brought home to me by some Christians in Newcastle who hosted a minister from Kenya.

He was fascinated by the fridge, and kept going to it and opening the door and staring at all the food that was so readily available.

3. The request is for "our" bread, not "my" bread.

Bailey records Mother Theresa's story of the time she took some rice to a family with 8 children who had not eaten.

The mother of the family took the rice and divided it into two portions and went out with one of them.

When she returned, Mother Theresa asked where she had been and her reply was, "They are hungry also."

"They" were the family next door, and although she and her 8 children had not eaten for a long time, in the middle of her suffering, she knew that they were also hungry.

"Give us this day the bread that doesn't run out"

So when Jesus said...

<sup>John 6:27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

he spoke to a culture that knew how uncertain life could be and where hunger was a constant reality!

Jesus' hearers then want to know...

<sup>28</sup> ... "What must we do to perform the works of God?"

In other words they ask, "What do we have to do to earn this bread?"

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

It is not a bread that is earned, but a gift given when you trust in the giver.

His hearers probably still have physical food in mind for they then refer to the manna that God supplied through Moses, when the Israelites were in the wilderness. A constant, dependable, daily gift of fresh food.

Jesus, however, is speaking of something far more important and long-lasting...

<sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

They probably still don't understand, and perhaps there is even a note of sarcasm in their voice when they say

<sup>34</sup> ... "Sir, give us this bread always."

So Jesus speaks more plainly...

<sup>35</sup> ... "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

It is Jesus who is the bread, sent by God, a gift from heaven, that gives life to the world.

When Jesus blessed and broke the bread at the last supper, he said, "This is my body given for you".

The bread of Holy Communion reminds us of Jesus' life laid down, so that we can be forgiven and reconciled to God.

We eat the wafer over and over, because we need to be constantly reminded of the full and sufficient sacrifice that was made once and for all.

When we put our trust in what Jesus has done we can be assured of the bread of life that doesn't run out – even when our bodies do!

Jesus promises eternal life, spiritual life through faith in him.

There is a temptation at this point to talk about how as Christians we keep feeding on Christ.

Reading the Bible, Praying, and continuing in fellowship with other Christians, parting of Holy Communion and so on

Those things are important in the strengthening of our faith but the point of what Jesus is saying is that while ordinary bread runs out, and we have to feed again...

**the person who comes to Jesus and believes in him already has the bread that lasts for eternity.**

The presence of Christ, through the Holy Spirit given to us is our constant, dependable gift and assurance that, though our bodies die, our spirit will live. This is the real bread that doesn't run out!!

But there is a parallel between the physical and the spiritual bread.

Just as we pray, "Give us this day the bread that doesn't run out"  
And recognise the need to share the food that we have been given.

So we are to share the news of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Heaven, with those around us, for in the words of the Indian lady with 8 mouths to feed...

"They... the next door neighbours... are hungry also"

They need the bread from heaven that never runs out.

When I was flying out from Kisumu airport on Lake Victoria in Kenya, I had a conversation with a young man, Joshua, who was the youth leader for their Diocese. He had looked after us during the week and now he spoke about his pay, which only just covered his rent.

"Sometimes," he said, "I go for three or four days without food."

Do you think that I could return to Australia, enjoy my fridge full of food, and do nothing for Joshua and his wife, Mercy?

The reality of the knowledge of such a situation is too great to be ignored.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. You have the bread of life that will never run out.

But you have neighbours, and you have friends and you have family who are spiritually starving in front of your eyes.

Evangelism has been defined as a starving man telling another starving man where to find bread.

Perhaps a better definition would be...

"People who have been starving telling others where they found bread."

Within the next couple of months you will see television adverts for Back to Church Sunday, and later the Jesus All About Life campaign.

It will be the opportunity for each of us to tell other people where they can find the Bread of Life that doesn't run out.

+ I remember when I was teaching, I was at a school camp and one evening we had a game where a pair of children throw a raw egg to each other, increasing the distance between them with each throw until the egg breaks on one of them. The pair achieving the greatest distance won.

There was a great deal of laughter and hilarity, but afterwards it was sobering to hear one of the teachers tell us that one of the little girls from a poor family had asked if she could have any eggs that were left over at the end.

What we were playing around with was precious food to that child.

Let's not play around, pleasing ourselves with the precious Good News of Jesus – the Bread of Life

Let's not miss the opportunity to share the free gift we have received. After all it's a matter of life and death!