

## How do you get life giving bread?

Text: John 6:41-51 for 8/12/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

*41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" 43 "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. 44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. 47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

Last week we heard Jesus warn a crowd of people about working for food that spoils. Then Jesus tells the crowd about a special kind of bread, bread that can keep a person from dying. Yet, you cannot buy this bread in the grocery store. There is no secret recipe to follow to try and bake some at home. This is why you want to listen closely to what Jesus has to say here because he is going to answer the question ...

Theme: How do you get life giving bread?

I. Grumbling won't get you what you need.

II. Listening leads to life giving Bread

This crowd of people that came to Jesus wanted bread for their bodies. They had seen Jesus perform a miracle by feeding over 5000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. After Jesus left that place the people went looking for him hoping to get more free bread. But when they found Jesus he told the people to stop looking for earthly food that could not save their souls. Instead Jesus tells the crowd that they should believe in him. Jesus said that he is the Bread of Life who came down from heaven to give life to the world.

But these people had a problem with Jesus saying this. The gospel writer John tells us: **At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"** (vs. 41, 42). These people knew Jesus. They were familiar with who he is and where he came from. They know his earthly parents, they know his family. This causes the crowd to grumble against Jesus. They just could not believe that Jesus was who he said he was: That he was the one who came from heaven to bring eternal life to this sinful world.

These people didn't want to hear about sin and spiritual life. This crowd was grumbling because they were tempted by what they thought was something better. They didn't want bread from heaven because that wasn't going to satisfy their stomachs, and it certainly wouldn't satisfy their greed for more. What they really wanted was a "bread king:" Someone who would make their lives in this world easier and more comfortable. Since Jesus wasn't giving them what they wanted they started grumbling against him. But grumbling didn't get them what they needed.

What tempts us to grumble about the Bread Jesus offers? Like the crowd, are we perhaps a little too familiar with Jesus? When it comes to Jesus we've heard it all before. Jesus can become so familiar to us to us that soon he seems like a plain, old piece of bread: He really isn't all that exciting. What the world offers us is way more exciting than what Jesus offers.

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The world offers money, sex, popularity, entertainment, and leisure. We look at Jesus and we don't see him offering us any of those things. Or do we grumble about Jesus because of our pride? If all a person ate every day was bread people might think that person was weird. If all we ever do is talk about Jesus people might think we are weird! And we don't want people to think we are weird. We want people to like us and accept us. Or do we grumble against Jesus because our real motivation is greed? Do we grumble about Jesus because we don't want him to tell us what we need; we just want him to give us what we want!

We see things that, to us, seem so much better than the Bread Jesus offers us. So we are tempted to grumble about eating that Bread, that is, we are tempted to grumble about trusting in Christ. We are tempted to set aside the Bread of Life and eat something that we believe looks and smells so much better. But be careful. Adam and Eve did that and look at what happened! We are still dealing with the effects of Adam and Eve eating what God told them not to eat. Grumbling will not get you life giving bread.

This is why Jesus says to us **"Stop grumbling"** (v. 43). Grumbling doesn't get us what we need. Jesus is the life giving bread that we need because it's only Jesus who gets us into heaven. This is why Jesus keeps repeating that saving truth. He says, **"I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"** (vs. 48-51).

Don't miss the important truths found in these words. Jesus says that he is the bread that "came down from heaven." If you were in the perfect paradise of heaven would you willingly give up that perfection to come into this corrupted, painful, sin-filled world? We might wonder who in their right mind would do that. Jesus did. He willingly set aside the glory of heaven to come into this death filled world to give you the opportunity to live forever. Christ willingly came to do what you and I could never do. Jesus came to perfectly glorify his heavenly Father with every thought, word, and action of his life. Then our Lord willingly gave up his "flesh," his perfect life, to pay for our grumbling; to pay for our foolish desire to throw away the Bread of life. Jesus died to pay for our desire to eat food that leads to death. Christ gave his life to pay for the sins of every person in this world. Now, Jesus freely offers you that life-giving Bread. This bread is the forgiveness you have through faith in him. Trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, and as Jesus says, you **"will live forever."** That is life giving bread!

Grumbling clearly does not get us what we need. In fact, grumbling will never bring us closer to that life-giving Bread. But if it is not by grumbling, then how do we get life giving bread? Jesus tells us: Listening leads to life giving Bread.

Who are we supposed to be listening to? Jesus tells us that also. He says, **"Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me"** (v. 45). God the Father has been speaking about the Bread of life from the time sin first came into this world. God always points to Jesus with his words. God told Eve he was going to send someone to crush Satan's head. God told Abraham the world would be blessed by one of his descendants. God told King David that one of his descendants would sit on a throne and rule forever. Through his prophet Isaiah God explained how his Son would come to serve, suffer, and die to save the world from the eternal death of sin. God spoke of how his punishment for sin would be carried out on his own Son. At Jesus birth, God loudly proclaimed that this baby in Bethlehem was the Savior who was coming to bring peace and joy to the world. Even at Jesus' baptism, the Father clearly states, **"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased"** (Matthew 3:17).

God the Father uses the power of his Word to feed his believing children life saving bread

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from heaven. God gave us a picture of that feeding in the first scripture reading for today. Queen Jezebel wanted to kill the prophet Elijah, so he ran for his life. But as Elijah was running from Jezebel he reached a point where he just wanted to give up. What kept him going? God fed him bread from heaven to keep him going. When we are tempted to give up on our faith what keeps us going? God feeds our souls with his Word. In the scriptures the Father tells us of his Son who is the living Bread from heaven. God uses that truth to continually feed our faith by leading us to his Son and moving our hearts and minds to trust in the forgiveness Christ won for us.

Jesus, the Bread of life, gives us the spiritual life and strength we need to live for God. Our Lord offers us his life-giving bread to help us fight temptation. He helps us fight the desire to take in things that are harmful to our souls. Yet we might wonder how can Jesus' spiritual bread help us fight physical temptations? The temptations we face are real. They are right in front of us every moment of every day. How can Jesus, who we cannot see or feel, help us fight temptations that we can see and feel?

Our Lord gives us the strength to fight temptation through his almighty word. Through his word Jesus gives us the ability to trust that he will help get us through the temptations that we face. He sends his Holy Spirit to bring into our minds all of the words of God that we hear and read. Then he uses those words to direct our thoughts and action. And when we fall into sin, Jesus calls us through his word to repent and turn to him for the forgiveness that we need.

Sometimes our Lord speaks his words to us directly through the scriptures that we read. Sometimes he speaks to us through others: pastors or teachers, Christian family and friends, or even fellow believers who remind us of the truth that sin brings death, but Jesus is the Bread who gives us eternal life.

And as we take in that Bread of life, our longings for the "junk food" of this world begins to subside. While it never goes away completely – because of our sinful nature – our desire for that food that spoils decreases when we are regularly in God's word. Within us then grows the desire to share that Bread. Do you know anyone who is grumbling against God and the Bread of life which he offers? Who do you know that keeps trying to fill themselves up with worldly stuff only to end up feeling empty time and again? Share with them the heavenly Bread that you have. Share with them Jesus, and let them know that through faith in Christ they will have a life that goes beyond this life; they will live forever. Remember, listening leads to life giving Bread. So listen, be fed, and then share. Let others hear the truth about the Bread of life.

How do you get life giving bread? You don't get it by grumbling. You get it by listening to the Word of God which leads a person to life giving Bread. God the Father uses his words to proclaim the life-giving work of his Son. With words of loving kindness God draws us in, fills us with faith, and then leads us to the sure and certain hope of eternal life. Amen.