# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

**“I Am the Bread of Life”**

**John 6:26-40**

**February 10, 2019**

The sixth chapter of the Gospel of John is the setting of one of the great teachings of Jesus, the focus of which is his declaration: “I am the bread of life.” Just as physical bread, representing food in general, sustains physical life, so Jesus is the one who sustains spiritual life. The chapter begins with thousands of people on the shore of the Sea of Galilee who have come to see and hear Jesus. They are all fed bread and fish from a little boy’s lunch, which Jesus multiplies so there is more than enough for them all. Jesus and his disciples leave that place, but many from that crowd of people who had been miraculously fed seek out Jesus and eventually locate him. It is their subsequent conversation with Jesus that we will read from this morning, and I invite you to turn with me to John 6:26-40

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. But don’t be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval.” They replied, “We want to perform God’s works, too. What should we do?” Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.” They answered, “Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, ‘Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, Moses didn’t give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” “Sir,” they said, “give us that bread every day.” Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But you haven’t believed in me even though you have seen me. However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father’s will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day.”

Jesus is speaking to three types of people. **The Materialists: those who simply want to be fed, and no more; the Sensationalists: those who want to see more miracles before they will believe; and, the Eternalists: those who believe, who are Jesus’ true disciples, and who will experience eternal life.** I wonder what you and I might have thought if we had been one of the people listening to Jesus that day when he said, “I am the bread of life.” What type of person would we have been – what type of person are we today?

**First, the materialists.** Many of the people who followed Jesus were only looking to Jesus for what they could get. “I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you.” The unhappy truth is that there are those who call themselves followers of Jesus who believe his primary job is to take care of them. It is up to Jesus to ensure they have a well-paying job, a good place to live, and a car that runs. It is his responsibility to perk them up when they’re down, to remove difficulty from their life, and to ensure that they are healthy. And, when those things don’t come, they feel as if Jesus has walked away from them.

Jesus never said that these things we desire are not important. But Jesus is not our material provider, blindly giving whatever we want for ourselves. Rather, Jesus challenges us to be less concerned about the physical realities of life and more concerned about the spiritual state of our eternal souls. “Don’t be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you.”

**Then there are the sensationalists.** These were the ones who wanted to see more miracles. “Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you.” They loved the spiritual high of watching Jesus take five loaves and two fish, multiply them, and feed thousands of people. They wanted him to do it again. In fact, like their forefathers wandering in the wilderness who were fed manna every day for 40 years, they wanted Jesus to keep them daily on a spiritual high. Sensationalists expect Jesus to take them from one mountain top to the next with no valleys in between.

We have people like this today. One writer I read this week refers to them as “pep rally Christians.” Basically what he is saying is that if the church keeps them wowed it keeps them around, but bore them and they will be gone. These people crave spectacular entertainment that will produce within them spiritual excitement. They constantly want new experiences, for even the most magnificent worship experience will grow stale with time. And, not only do they expect the church to come through for them in this way, but Jesus needs to produce similar results. Otherwise, why spend time with him?

Who is the worship service for? For whose glory do we seek to follow the teachings of Christ? To whose credit do we obey the commandments of God? I hope none of us would seriously respond, “This service is for me, I follow the teachings of Jesus for my glory, and I obey the commandments of God to my credit.” We gather to worship, we follow the teachings of Jesus, and we obey the commandments of God for his sake, for his glory, and to his credit.

I pray that each one of us recognizes the fallacy of the materialist and sensationalist view of Jesus, and by faith receive him as not simply the one who gives bread or performs miracles, but the one who is the bread of life. “Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.” **The eternalists** are those who come to him and believe, those who remain committed to him no matter the cost, and those whom Jesus will raise up on the last day.

What, then, does it mean to believe in Jesus? The best synonym for “believe” is “trust.” To trust means more than simply to acknowledge truth about Jesus – that he is, for example, the Son of God. Scripture tells us that the demons believe this, and tremble. However, that clearly does not give them eternal life with God. The demons know who Jesus is and they have chosen to oppose him. You and I need not only to know who Jesus is, but to entrust ourselves to him and follow his will for our lives. To trust that whatever he asks of us is for God’s glory and will allow us to live our very best life. Trust is the key.

Many of you have heard at least one and perhaps both of these modern parables that help to illustrate trust, or the lack of it. First, there is the story of the tightrope walker who had his tightrope strung across Niagara Falls. A huge crowd gathered to watch whether he would make it across. He picked up his balancing pole and walked across. Then, he turned around and walked back. The crowd cheered. Then he took a wheelbarrow and walked across with it in front of him. On the other side he filled it with rocks and walked it back across. The crowd was amazed. He emptied the wheelbarrow of its rocks, turned to the crowd, and said, “Who believes that they can get in the wheelbarrow and that I can walk them safely across to the other side?” There were no takers.

The second story involves a man hiking through the wilderness. He comes to the edge of a cliff and looks over to see how far down it is. He slips on a rock and falls, but manages to grab onto the branch of a tree growing out the side of the cliff. Unable to haul himself back up, he cries out, “Help! Is there anyone up there?” He hears a voice from heaven which says, “I am the Lord thy God. Let go of the tree and I will save you.” The man thinks it over and says, “Is there anyone else up there?”

To believe in the bread of life is to believe that he died and rose again, ascended into heaven, and has sent his Holy Spirit to live in our lives. To believe in him is to believe that he knows what he is talking about when he tells us how to live, and to live that way through the strength he gives. To believe in him is to make ourselves available so he can be at work in the world through us, love people through us, offer grace through us, and spread the Good News of who he is for all who believe. “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”