

February 8, 2015

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

Matthew 4:1-4

In the gospel of John, after Jesus fed five thousand people with “*five small barley loaves and two small fish*” (6:9), He withdrew to be by Himself. (6:15) Meanwhile, the disciples got into a boat and headed across the Sea of Galilee toward Capernaum. Jesus was not with them. He walked across the water. Some of the crowd of five thousand came looking for Him the next day. The boat was gone and they knew Jesus had not been in it when the disciples took off. They got into some other boats and rowed across to Capernaum looking for Jesus there. “When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the sign, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 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 . For it is on Him that God the Father has set His Seal!’ Then they said to Him, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He has sent.’” (John 6:25-29)

“Do not labor for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life!” (6:27)
“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God!” (Matthew 4:4) Moses had said it long ago. (Deuteronomy 8:3) After forty years since the Exodus from Egypt, Moses spoke of how God had tested the people in the wilderness. God “*humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God!*”

After forty days of fasting, “*He was hungry.*” (Matthew 4:2) We all know what that’s like. We may not know the emptiness of forty days’ worth of eating nothing, or, at least, next to nothing; but we know what it is to be hungry. Our God, in human form, hungered. That means He needed food. People who need food, usually don’t want anything else. It is hard to be patient when you are hungry. It is hard to do anything else when you’re hungry. You’re too weak to work, and earn enough first, in order to buy yourself a meal. You’re probably irritable. And you can easily become desperate. And, I’ve said it many times in my career: when you’re hungry, you’ll eat anything... even if it’s not good for you. And there are many different kinds of hunger.

Loneliness is a kind of hunger, so people will seek out companionship... even with people who are not good for them. Grief and sadness can be a kind of hunger, so people will seek out something joyful, even in ways that are only temporary. But behind it all, always in the background, is the need for food, the need to sustain our bodies, the instinct for self-preservation.

People need food. This is the first thing we should share, when we have more than enough. And I believe that, in a world where there is so much abundance that we can call some of the things we eat *junk food*, no one should ever go hungry. We just need to do a better job of sharing.

Think of the story of Stone Soup...

The reality of our earthly lives is that we all need bread, and we all can share. But Jesus tells us that we do not live on bread alone! True living comes by feasting on the Word of God; on “*the food that*

endures to eternal life." And to labor for it is a matter of *believing* in Jesus. It is a matter of faith. It is a matter of following the Savior, the Son of God.

But think... The son of God tells us (and these are words from the mouth of God) to feed the hungry. Remember, "*inasmuch as you did it to the least of these* (and that included "*when I was hungry you gave me food,*" (Matthew 25:35), *you did it unto me.*" (Matthew 25:40)

The inward and spiritual grace of our faith reveals itself in outward and visible ways. And of course, we don't feed others because of who they are, we share our food because of who we are!

We do not live because we have bread, but we live because we give!

So... you heard the word of Christ that to labor for the "*food that endures to eternal life,*" is to *believe* in One sent by God! Let me ask you this: What if you decided that in order to sustain your body, you would set a time and a day and you would eat all the food you needed for the whole week at that time? Do you think you could do it? Some of us might be able to do it. But, most of us could never eat enough to truly sustain us for a week. We would probably quit once we felt pretty full, and that would probably not be enough to sustain us for seven days. So...why do we think that one hour on Sunday is enough to sustain us for a week, let alone for eternal life?

Do you want to live? Really live? Read the Word of God! Study the word of God! Join a Class that teaches the Word of God. Listen to preachers that preach the Word of God! I do. You hear the Bible preached in this place! I love to tell the story! I love to immerse myself in the words of the Bible in such a way that it is perpetually on my mind. Yes, I may read other types of books, but daily, I am in the Word. We need the Word. It gives us life. It is the Breath of God. It is an inspiration. Don't be satisfied with one hour of spiritual vitamins. People should be clawing at the pastor begging for more study opportunities. Wanting to be filled, hoping their cups will overflow.

We need bread, yes. But the world needs us to fill ourselves *with every word that comes from the mouth of God*. Remember the story of Stone Soup! Don't be tempted by food and the possibility of filling just yourself with worldly nutrition. Seek to labor for the food that endures to eternal life!!! Please.