

## **I AM the Bread of Life**

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

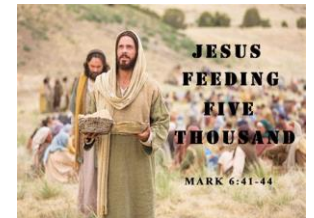
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

November 14, 2021

**Text:** John 6:1-15, 26-35

**Purpose:** Jesus claimed that he was the bread of life. If we eat of this bread and believe in Him, then we will never thirst again and will not be cast out of fellowship with Him. Jesus is like living water and living bread. If we come to him, he will fill our souls and satisfy our thirst. He is to be our sustenance.

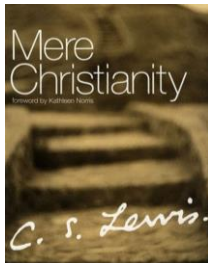
Over the past month, we have been examining the life of Jesus through the eyes of the Disciple John. In the book of John, we see that there are seven special miracles or signs as John calls them, to prove to us that Jesus is the Messiah that Israel has been anticipating. The sign or miracle of the five loaves of bread and two fish that we are examining today, became enough of a feast to feed over 5000 is hard for us to comprehend.



Several liberal theologians that I have read this week have suggested that maybe Jesus had His disciples gather bread ahead of time and hid it in a cave. When the time came for distribution of the bread, Jesus simple pulled the bread from under his flowing robe and out of the cave and passed it out into the crowd. The more I think about that illustration, the more faith it must take to believe that story over what the bible records for us. I believe the account we have in

scripture is exactly the way it happened that day on the hillside in that Judean area.

There are some people in our world that would rather believe a lie than face the truth presented in the bible. Over this past week, I have been thinking more and more about what we talked about last week. Jesus is the Son of God, come in the flesh so that we can have life and have it more abundantly. One of the books that I have read, and would encourage you to read, is “Mere Christianity” by C. S. Lewis. This book expounds on the very topic, the trinity that I spoke about last Sunday. If you have not had the opportunity to read this, it is an excellent Christian classic.



As I approached this passage about the feeding of the 5000, we can find similar accounts in the gospels of Matthew in chapter 14, Mark chapter 6, Luke chapter 9 and here in John chapter six.



If you just think about the sheer magnitude of how many people this is, this truly is a sign worth noting. Jesus fed over 5000 men, not including women and children. The crowd could have been as much as 15,000. No wonder the Pharisees and Sadducees were getting worried. No wonder the “powers that be,” were ruffled.

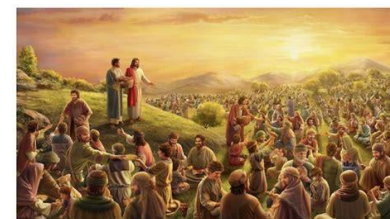
Verse one says, “After these things, Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberius and a great multitude followed Him because of the signs they saw and the miracles of healing that he performed.”

Jesus went there to be alone and to get away from the crowds. But they would not go away. They flocked to him with their sick family members in search of a miracle.

Jesus lifted up His eyes and He saw them. It was not the disciples that were concerned about this mass of people. I am sure they liked the attention. They liked being “WITH” the man of the hour. But Jesus saw the mass of people.

## I. Desires that they should be fed. <sup>1</sup>

The first thing I noticed was Jesus desired to feed them. He knew they had pursued him. He knew that they may not be prepared with their sacks of food. Very few of us today, and probably then, packed a sack lunch.



As you can imagine the crowds are building everywhere Jesus went. To me this indicates what kind of Lord Jesus really is. He is concerned about our needs even before we know about them. He is planning and preparing for our needs.

## II. Seeks the input of his followers.

In verse five, we see that Jesus is asking His disciple Philip about this situation. Jesus says, “*Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?*” A more modern way of saying that



<sup>1</sup> Handfuls on Purpose, Vol. VI, page 213-223.

would be, “Where are we going to get enough groceries to feed this hungry mob?”

The heart of Christ desires that we enter into the concern of others. So often we are only concerned about ourselves, our family, or our church friends. The heart of Christ would be delighted if we were concerned about those that could not pay us back. The heart of Christ would be brightened if we took seriously the call to visit the sick, feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, and visit those in prison.

In one of the parables, Jesus makes a statement about one of the standards in which we will be judged. Did you feed the hungry? Did you clothe the naked? Did you visit the sick and those in prison?

In this story, just as today, Jesus does not need us to accomplish His will. Yet, He has given us a wonderful opportunity to join Him in the ministry. Even today, Jesus seeks our best answer, our best effort, and then He will take that and add His blessing to it and multiply it.

### **III. Knows from where the supply is coming**

There are some people walking around patting themselves on the back for what they are doing for God’s kingdom. But all the while, Jesus knows from where the source of this supply is coming.

In Verse six, it says, “*But Jesus said this to Philip to test Him. Jesus already knew what He was going to do.*” Jesus saw the situation better than anyone. This was just another example, sign, or miracle that Jesus would do in order to prove who He was and that there would be no question.

When God calls us to a task, and has asked us to do something, He will see it through. It may not be in our lifetime, it may not be tomorrow, but God will see it through.



Philip was shocked at Jesus’ insistence that this crowd be given food. If I was there, I probably would have said the same thing as Philip. He said, “*Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may have a little.*”

Scholars have wondered why Philip used the words, “*Two hundred denarii.*” They speculated that it is possible that Judas gave a financial report that morning on the funds available in the purse. It is hard to know where that number came from.

If you remember from the parable of the Landowner who hired workers for his vineyard, a denarius is a day’s wages for the average laborer. It would be like saying, ten thousand dollars is not enough money to buy food to feed these people. In that day and time, bread was the main source of food and sustenance. To have bread was to have life. To have no bread, meant that you went hungry. Meat was rare to obtain. Vegetables were also rare. But in this region, bread was the main food source.

Imagine 15,000 people coming to this church and we were to feed them. We would run up quite a grocery bill at Piggly Wigley to feed that crowd. This is what Jesus faced that afternoon.



#### IV. Makes use of little gifts.

But Andrew, the one that we call “Andrew the bringer,” sized up the situation. Andrew brought Bartholomew and today he is bringing a young boy that had a brown bag lunch. Some little boy’s mother did not want him to go hungry as he went out for the day.

I once heard a Mother’s Day sermon using this passage. The hero of the passage was not Andrew, Philip, or even Jesus. It was the mother. She cared enough about her son to pack his lunch. In the lunch were five small cakes or biscuits of bread and two portions of fish. It was one of the first fish sandwiches!

Mystery Of The Five Loaves & Two Fishes



Jesus asked everyone to be seated in groups. There was to be an orderly distribution of food. Before the food was distributed, Jesus took the bread and the fish and then gave thanks. Jesus I am sure lifted the small loaves up to heaven, thanking God for His provision for their relationship. Thanking God for multiplying the bread. Then he began to distribute it

Jesus was able to take that boy’s lunch, and make a banquet out of it.

There was a gospel song sung years ago called, “Little is Much, when God is in it.” It is so true. Little can be much when we add Christ into our situation.

#### V. Jesus is all sufficient for this emergency

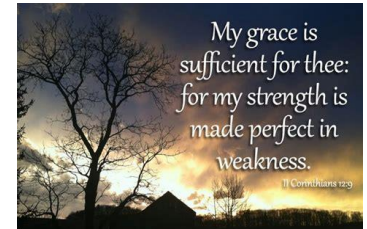
Jesus was sufficient for the situation. I don’t know what your particular situation may be today. Maybe you are struggling in marriage. Maybe you are struggling in your work situation. It could be school, or health, or simply the stress of life. I want you to know that whatever situation you may be in, Christ is sufficient for your emergency.

Often, we will pray, “Lord, if you would only fix -----, then I will do -----.” Or maybe we pray, “Lord, please change -----, then my life will be better.” What I

have found is that rarely does God answer in the way we want, wish or desire. What I have found in most situations, God comes back and says, “My Grace is sufficient for Thee.”

He promised He would never leave or forsake us. Often it is not HE that has moved, but it is US that have moved away from God. Jesus is still in the “come unto me all ye that are heavy laden” business. He promised, “AND I **WILL** GIVE YOU REST.”

- In the Lion’s Den Daniel rested in the Lord.
- When Jonah was in the belly of the whale, the Lord was with him.
- In the concentration camps of Germany, Corrie Ten Boon found Christ with her in the midst of a terrible situation.
- In the midst of Job’s trials and tribulations, God did not leave him. He would not curse God and die.



## VI. Feeds the people through His disciples

In verse 11, Jesus gave the baskets of bread and fish to His disciples and they distributed them to the people. Very similar to the way we once distributed the Lord's Supper here at church. Notice how in and of themselves, the disciples could not feed the crowd. If they tried in their own power, might, resources, then they would be unable to do it. But because of Jesus, they were able to accomplish the impossible.



You and I have a rare privilege to hear, understand, and likewise share God's word with others. For over a thousand years, the church services were all in Latin. No one understood what the priest was saying or what it meant. Even after that, the church fought against the word of God being proclaimed as we do today. Many of the sermons from that day were allegorical interpretations of the scripture and they rarely reflected the meaning of the text.

Today we have a great responsibility to understand God's word and then share it. Each of us can learn more. Each of us can study more. Each of us can communicate God's love in word and in deed. We have freely received the bread of life and now we need to share this same bread.

When the children of Israel left Egypt, they hungered after the food of Egypt. God wanted them to depend upon Him for their food. He provided bread from heaven every morning for them to collect. This was to be their daily food supply. God commanded that they were only to collect

enough for one day. If they collected more than they needed, then the next morning it would be rotten. The only day God permitted two days collection was on Friday morning to provide enough for the Sabbath. No Manna rained down from heaven on that day.

We do not need to store up this bread of heaven and not share it. We need to put it to use.

## VII. Provides enough for all

What thrills my heart about this story is that there was enough for everyone. EVERY person there was filled to until they were satisfied. Once they had finished, the disciples collected the leftovers. Do you know what, it was twelve baskets full? I am sure the little boy took those leftovers home to his mother to show what a little given to God will grow into.



This was an amazing sign to everyone present. The reality of who Jesus was really did not matter to the group. Here was a person that could feed them, heal them, what more could they want! Jesus perceived in their hearts that they were only interested in the temporary things of life. According to verse 15, we can see that they wanted to make Him king. But as the theme of John reiterates, it was not Jesus' hour.

If we move down to verse 26, we see Jesus moving from feeding his sheep to instructing his sheep. Jesus knows their hearts. He said you did not seek me because of who I am, you are seeking me because I filled your belly.

Jesus is pleading with them, do not seek the things that are only temporary, but rather, seek the things that are permanent.

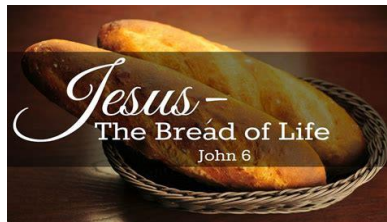
The disciples still do not understand. They want the same power Jesus had. They want to be able to do the mighty works He is doing. The only work Jesus told them to do is found in verse 29. **“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”** That is all. **BELIEVE not DO.**

Martin Luther found that it is by FAITH and not WORKS that we become justified before God. The same that was true when he nailed the 95 thesis on the door of the Wittenberg Church in Germany is true for us here in Kinston here at Spilman. We need to exercise our faith in God. Trust Him.

### VIII. Source of this Bread.

In John 6:32, Jesus alluded to the manna God sent to the children of Abraham in the desert of Sinai. It did not come from Moses; it came from God himself. The manna came from Heaven, just as Jesus came from Heaven. This time God has sent another bread. That bread was Jesus Christ Himself. Over and over in the Old Testament God gave a pattern for things that would come in the future.

Jesus sums it up for us, **“I AM the Bread of Heaven.”**



Why do we want to complicate God’s message? Why do we want to put roadblocks in the road to accepting Jesus as God’s One and Only Son?

Jesus came to give us life eternal. It only comes about as we surrender to Christ, accept Him by faith as our sole source of Salvation. It is like cutting the rope. It is like not packing an extra pair of clothes just in case. It is fully placing all we are in God’s hands.

He has said He is the living water. If we drink of it, we will not perish. In this passage he is saying he is the Bread of Life. If we eat of it, we will live forever. (John 6:35)

Jesus has identified the two key elements of Life. Bread and Water. We need this also or we cannot live – both spiritually as well as physically.

Before we close this morning, I wanted to share a story I came across several years ago. It is the story of a young man by the name of Terry Bell.<sup>2</sup>

The year was 1969. It was my first “real” mission trip. I was in a little village in South India and terribly homesick. I was 20 years old and starving for a “good ole” American cheeseburger. I had not had one in 2 ½ months.

The land around me was semi-jungle, semi-bush. Tarzan would have felt right at home, but I did not.

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<sup>2</sup> A Treasury of Bible Illustrations, Number 690, “Feed Poor Boys, Sir!” page 278.

One boring afternoon I whiled away the hours by playing with the monkeys that forever enlivened our premises. Standing out on the balcony, I teased little monkeys by giving them dough balls made from a loaf of bread I was holding. The hairy hand would reach over the edge of the roof, I would place a morsel in it and like lightening, it reacted with squealing and grunting delights. What a great game!



Suddenly I realized that on the streets below my balcony a crowd had gathered. They were not nearly as entertained by this “monkeying around” as I was. One think-faced sickly-looking boy looked up at me with bulging eyes. In broken English, he said, “Master, feed poor boys, not monkeys.”



It was a stab in the heart. In the street below were orphans, beggars, lepers ... the overlooked and despised of society. Here were mothers and fathers who had starving children. Children who watched malnourished parents die. Parents would watch their hungry children watching them die, knowing they left them to a miserable life on the streets. And here I was playing games with the bread that for them was so precious. I was cut to the heart.

How many of us here play games with God’s precious word? How many of us take for granted the grace and love and forgiveness that God has given us? Are we like that young missionary playing games while there are people who REALLY NEED this saving word of hope, grace, and love that can only be found in Jesus Christ?

This week as we leave, let us not take for granted this Bread of Life, Jesus Christ. We can leave here this morning assured that Jesus is who He said He was. We can leave here this morning knowing that Jesus is able to enter into our situation and walk with us and never forsake us. If you have never committed your life to Christ, maybe today is the day to make that step of faith. He is the only bread offered to this world that will satisfy perfectly.



## **LET US PRAY**

### **An Invitation**

Maybe you have been coming to this church for some time and have never joined us. You may have been a part of this community of faith for some time here, but you want to affirm your commitment publicly by joining our church through baptism or by transfer of letter from another church. Maybe before coming forward and joining, you would like to talk with me before you make that step forward. I would be glad to meet with you individually to talk about this with you. Please feel free to call me. We as a church welcome your decision while we sing our closing hymn.

