

Jesus, the Bread of Life¹

Spillman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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November 27, 2022

Text: Exodus 16:4 and John 6:35-51

Purpose: Just as God sent manna from heaven to feed the people of Israel in the wilderness, in these last days, God has sent His son Jesus Christ to offer everlasting life to all that receive this “Bread of Life.”

We have come to the season of the year known as Christmas. It is the celebration of Jesus’ first appearance to mankind. We rejoice because the promises of God for a Messiah have been realized in the birth of the child of Bethlehem. The world has received her King and those that welcome Christ, celebrate the One that has come to reconcile us back to God and forgive our sins.



We sing at Christmas to remind us of how Christ came to earth in human flesh and how this is the most significant event in human history. We sing because Jesus is worthy of being acknowledged and He should be at the center of every area of our life.

Jesus Christ came in the fullness of time as our Messiah. We sing during Advent, “*Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*” because the world for centuries has been

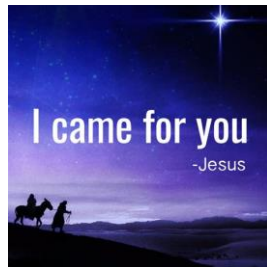
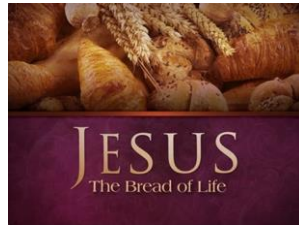


anticipating God's advent with us. We sing "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" as a way of reminding us that Christ's first appearing has already happened. Last week was "Christ the King" Sunday. It reminds us that Jesus is coming again, not as the babe of Bethlehem, but as the soon coming reigning King.

Christmas is important because of whose birthday we celebrate – Jesus Christ.

So, who is Jesus? May I suggest we listen to the words of Jesus and see how He answered that question. Over the next few weeks of Advent, I want to focus on Jesus' own statements concerning who He is.

In the New Testament text that I read; we see Jesus making this declaration. "I am the bread of life." Bread is the substance of life. We all realize if we refuse to eat, we will surely waste away and die. Bread is something we can all depend upon. Jesus is much more than physical bread; Jesus is the bread of life that nourishes a relationship between us and God. It is this bread – this relationship – that actually gives us eternal life. Physical bread will nourish us for a day. The bread that nourishes us from Jesus Christ provides us everlasting life. As we examine this topic of "Jesus, the Bread of Life" I want us to see there are two parts, two actions, or two movements involved. There is an action, and a reaction. ***The first is Jesus coming to us. The second is us coming to Jesus.***



I. Jesus Comes to Us

A. Divine Revelation and Divine-Human Reconciliation

All of us gathered here are familiar with the nativity scene. We have seen these portrayed in person, in magazines, and on television. We have seen images of a stable with straw, a few sheep, goats, donkeys, goats and camels. We see Mary and Joseph standing in the middle holding a new born child. Maybe there were angels and shepherds in attendance. Sadly, our world today does not see this as an innocent scene, but is so offensive to some, that some towns have taken steps to remove these displays from the public square.

It is my understanding that Spilman used to host a live nativity scene every year. My friend Bruce Herrmann told me when he was a member here years ago, it fell to him to return the animals to the proper owner. He did not have anything to haul them in so he rented a U-Haul to get them back!



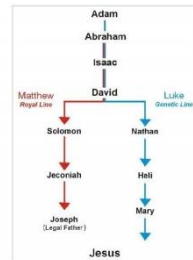
When Jesus arrives on the scene in Bethlehem it is no accident. This is the very town that King David was born in many years prior. This small town mentioned in Micah 5:2 would host the birth of the Messiah. I have been to Bethlehem and looked out over the fields where tradition says Jesus was born. It was this place that God chose to reveal the very heart of God.

It was in God's plan for mankind to know God more fully. God came in the flesh to dwell among us. The word "Emmanuel" literally means "God with us." This was the very first step in God's plan of reconciliation between mankind and God. God was sending Himself to us as a gift. That is good news!



B. Jesus Identifies with Us

What a strange way for the Creator of the Universe to reveal Himself to His creation? God sent His only begotten Son to be born of the Virgin Mary who was of the line and lineage of King David. She was engaged to be married to Joseph who was also of the line and lineage of King David.



God knew for mankind to ever really know Him, He had to become like one of us.



The story is told of a man that had a really difficult time understanding why God would ever stoop to such a low level and become a man Himself. He was convinced that the Christmas story was simply a fanciful fairy tale believed by gullible people. One evening as he was sitting in his recliner watching television, he began to hear a lot of noise outside. He looked and saw dozens of birds flying into sliding glass window at the rear of the house. Apparently, the sunlight was hitting the glass just right and caused them to do this. He went outside and tried to stop them, but they

continued to fly straight into the glass doors. Many birds were injured and some even died from their suicide attacks on the glass doors.



The man went out to his barn and got a bag of birdseed and made a trail of bird seed away from the house trying to lead them to safety. But they continued to pound into the glass doors. He tried unsuccessfully to drive them in another direction. In utter frustration, the man had a flash of inspiration, he said to himself, "If only I could become a bird, then I could talk to them in their own language and show them the way to safety and food."

After the sun went down, the birds stopped their assault on the doors. The man suddenly realized that is exactly what God has done for us. He became human in order to talk to us in our own language and to lead us to an eternal home. That baby born almost two thousand years ago reminds us that God does know how we feel. Jesus grew up just as we did. I am sure he cried just as any baby would. He was hungry just as we are at times. I am sure He even soiled his diapers and skinned his knees learning to walk. He grew up experiencing all of the same joys and sorrows of daily life.



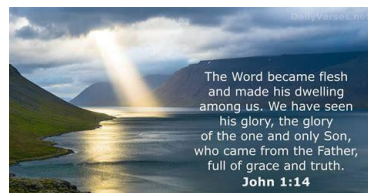
When He suffered betrayal, ridicule, torture, and crucifixion, He identified with mankind in every way imaginable. We have a Savior that can identify with us and know exactly how we feel. God can identify with us and that is Good News!

C. Jesus Leads Us to God

Have you ever been lost and stopped and asked for directions? I know I have done that several times over the years. Maybe there were several people there that began to give directions – maybe several people at the same time. One says you need to go this way. Another says you should go this way. When you are lost, which voice do you listen to? They all sound so sure of themselves.

The world we live in is giving us many suggestions as to how we are to live our life. Some would say as the Epicurean's did years ago, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die." Others may be on the other end of the spectrum as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes, "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity."

When it comes to eternal matters, the world has no clear answer. Jesus has come so that we may be able to come back to God. The Gospel of John begins with that magnificent prologue, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (John 1:1). Jesus is the ultimate expression of God, the incarnation of God. He can tell us what God is like because he came from God. He can show us the way to God because He is from God. "*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory.*" (v. 14) The babe in Bethlehem shows us the way to God. That is good news!



D. Jesus Proclaims Joy to the World

Jesus has come to proclaim "Joy to the World!"



Some evidence in the world today indicates people do not live very happy lives. I don't know if you have ever had the opportunity to see the program, "Last Comic Standing." It is a reality show that allows individuals that want to break into the comedy business to compete against each other. I think I watched the show for about 15 minutes until I could not stand it anymore.

The world's idea of humor and laughter comes from some of the most vulgar and disgusting thoughts devised. The humor that passes for humor today involves profanity, vulgarity, cynicism, sarcasm, and ridicule.

The message of Jesus is that He has come to bring us hope and joy in times where those ideals are in short supply. Jesus can add meaning to our living; and add purpose to our pain and problems. The babe in Bethlehem brings joy to the world. That is good news!

E. Jesus Unites Us with God

Jesus invites us to enter into a relationship with God.

There is a story told of an emperor in Germany during the sixteenth century that received a very expensive pie. The story goes that the emperor owed an international banker one million dollars. One Christmas this banker sent a special gift, a gift of great value, a pie to the emperor. The banker placed a note of cancelation of that debt inside the

Christmas pie. When the emperor ate the pie, he found that his million-dollar debt was canceled.

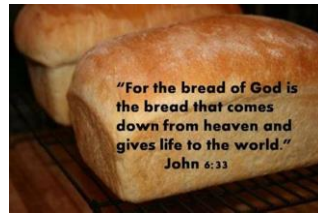
The birth of Jesus Christ that first Christmas is God's Christmas pie to us. He is saying to us, your sin debt has been paid when you receive the gift of Jesus Christ. He is saying our sins are forgiven when we receive the babe of Bethlehem as our own. The babe of Bethlehem invites us to receive Him. That is good news!

II. Jesus Calls Us to Come to Him

The idea of Jesus being the bread of life as mentioned in John gives us a tremendous picture of our relationship with Jesus. Jesus is calling us to take of the bread of life and receive it for ourselves. In order to obtain it, you must receive it.

You have heard it said before, "You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make them drink." As a parent you know you can prepare a good meal for you kids, but you cannot make them eat it. You may want to be someone's friend, but you cannot make them be your friend. It is equally true, "You can tell others of Jesus, but you cannot make them believe."

Jesus will not force Himself on anyone against their will. When we come to Jesus we must come willingly. Over and over, we see the Lord calling people to Himself. Some come, others simply turn away.



III. Jesus Invites Us to the Table to Eat and Drink

One of the most confusing and confounding statements made by Jesus is a literal interpretation of the passage of scripture found in John 6:47-58.



In this passage of scripture, we find Jesus issuing an invitation. Jesus said, *"I am the living bread from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*

Those gathered there questioned Jesus, *"How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"* The quarreling Jews could not understand what Jesus was talking about. They were thinking about cannibalism. They thought Jesus was speaking about his followers literally eating the flesh and blood of Jesus.

Jesus was speaking symbolically.

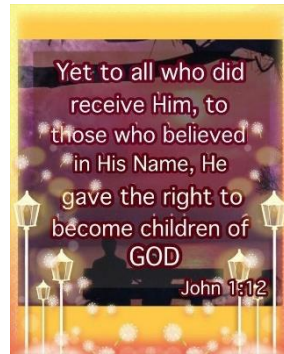
The Jews gathered there were accustomed to sacrifices and offerings being presented in the temple where part of it was consumed in the fire, some was left with the priest for their food supply, and often the rest went home with the one presenting the sacrifice to be eaten at home with their family. They understood physically eating a sacrifice offered at the temple.

Jesus continued to push this idea forward of eating the flesh and blood of Jesus. This idea repulsed many and caused

many to struggle with what Jesus was trying to teach them about Him being the bread of life.

In verses 60-61, Jesus opens the meaning up to them more fully. *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life, but there are some of you that do not believe.”*

The main point of Jesus is that you have to receive it within you. You must take it in as you take in food. Simply knowing about Jesus is not enough. Simply knowing the stories of Jesus is not enough. Receiving Him as your Lord and Savior is what Jesus is referring to. Asking Him to forgive you of your sins, believing He is the Son of God, confessing your sins unto him, and believing in your heart Jesus is who He says He is – that is the process by which you become transformed by the Bread of Life – Jesus Christ.



Maybe an illustration can help you understand this a little better.

- If you go to the store and purchase a cake, you may have it but you don't possess it. You only have it when you receive it into yourself.
- If someone gives you a book and you put it on the shelf, you may have it but you don't possess it because you have not read the book and allowed the words of its pages become a part of you.
- If you own a piece of land and never tend it, plant on it, or build on it, you may have your name on the deed, but you don't take hold of it and make it useful to you.

If you have the title “Christian” stuck on your clothes, or a cross around your neck, or a fish symbol bumper sticker on your car, but you have not received Christ into your heart and life and allowed Him to transform you, then you are as sounding brass and whitewashed tombs. On the outside you may sound fine and look good, but on the inside, you are hollow and filled with dead men's bones.



As long as Jesus remains externally detached from you, the transforming power of the Spirit of God will not change one thing about you. The power of the Spirit of God comes from within when we eat from and receive the Bread of Life.

“The words that Jesus speaks to you are Spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:30)

May this Christmas season, you receive the Good News that God sent His Son into the world to redeem the world. Believe and receive everlasting life!

LET US PRAY

Notes: ¹ Sermon Outline from the Pastor's Annual, Zondervan, 2007 edition, pages 331-334.