**I AM the Bread of Life**

September 13, 2015

John 6:25-40

Key Verse 6:35 “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.’”

As we start a new academic year, we want to know who Jesus is. So we begin “I AM” series from John’s gospel. There are 7 "I AM" statements in John's gospel. When Jesus used the phrase “I AM,” he made specific revelations regarding his identity and nature. These revelations made it clear to all that he was claiming to be much more than a rabbi or prophet; Jesus claimed to be the Messiah—God in human form.

I am the bread of life. (John 6:35)

I am the light of the world. (John 8:12, 9:5)

I am the gate. (John 10:9)

I am the good shepherd. (John 10:11)

I am the resurrection and the life. (John 11:25-26)

I am the way and the truth and the life. (John 14:6)

I am the true vine. (John 15:1)

We find Jesus as One who satisfies (bread of life), One who gives life (light), One who offers salvation (gate), One who dies for us (good shepherd), the resurrection and the life, the way, truth, and life, and the true (real, legitimate) vine. As such, Jesus fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the Messiah, predicted His resurrection, and presents himself as the only way of salvation. Today we study “I am the bread of life.” It teaches us that only in Jesus we are truly satisfied. According to a statistics, an average user of Facebook has 130 friends, and spends 700 minutes per month on Facebook. People work very hard, staying up very late, posting their vacation pictures and where they ate, to get admiration from their facebook friends. They feed on admiration of others. When they do not get it, they get hungry and thirsty. Instead, we should feed on Jesus every day by memorizing and meditating on his word. Then we will be truly satisfied.

In the previous passage, Jesus fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish. This miraculous sign showed that Jesus is God and the supplier of all human needs. Jesus’ feeding the 5,000 was the divine revelation to mankind that Jesus is God who solves man’s bread problem. Through this sign, they should have had faith in God and solved their bread problem. But they did not grasp any spiritual significance in it. Rather they were thinking about free hamburgers and fish sandwiches from Jesus again. They were dreaming of eating bread without working hard. They misunderstood the real intention of Jesus’ miracle. Rather they became politically ambitious to make Jesus burger-king by force. When they came to Jesus first, they came to see the Messiah and miraculous signs. At that time, they had some spiritual quality. But this time, they came only to solve their bread problem. They did not grow spiritually after tasting God’s blessing. They were degenerated from spiritual level to material level. But Jesus did not give up on them. Instead Jesus taught them the absolute truth of God. Jesus said in verse 27a, “Do not work for food that spoils...” When Jesus said this, he really wanted to bring them to the truth of God. What does it mean when Jesus said, “Do not work for food that spoils...”? Jesus does not mean that we should not work for our living. In order to understand this, let’s think about what bread is. Bread is the same as Money. Men work hard to make money to buy bread to eat and live. The bread problem represents the life problem or life-security problem. Many live under the illusion that material abundance will make them happy. Students study hard with the single desire to get a good job and make a lot of money. If anything interferes with their plan to make money, they become very nervous, even hostile. But Jesus warns us against the tragic mistake of working hard only for money. Those who trust in money have an appointment with disillusionment.

When Jesus said, “Do not work for food that spoils,” he meant that they should not spend all their effort just to earn bread. Jesus wants to liberate mankind from God’s curse. When God created man in his own image, God gave man a holy mission to be a steward of his creation. God provided free food when they had mission from God. Man did not have to live for money but for the glory of God. It was a paradise. But Adam sinned against God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He lost God’s holy mission. Then he was sentenced to lifetime hard labor only to toil day after day for food that spoils. According to Genesis 3:17, a life that is spent only toiling for food that spoils is a cursed life. Those who work only for food that perishes feel tired and had nothing to be joyful. They only live to work and consume food and die in the end without knowing why they have to struggle so hard and return to the dust. Here we learn that those who work only for food that spoils are those who are living a cursed life, and that those who do not have God’s holy mission in their hearts are cursed men.

The second part of verse 27 says, “...but for food that endures to eternal life.” Here “food that endures to eternal life” is Jesus himself. When Jesus said, “work for food that endures to eternal life,” he meant that we must believe in the Son and have eternal life. When we have eternal life, we have no life problem and we are happy forever. Man should not live as if his body were everything. He should not devote all his strength and talents and money to satisfy his flesh desires, which in a few short years will be eaten by worms. Rather, he should make sure that his soul is fed day by day with the Word of God. Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” St. Augustine rightly observed that every single person has a God-shaped vacuum in his soul. We can attempt to fill that cavity with a host of other things, but finally nothing satisfies thirst for our redemption and our hunger for significance except Jesus and his gospel. You are all familiar with the old saying: Money can buy you a house, but not a home; money can buy you an education, but not wisdom; money can buy you a bed, but not restful sleep; money can buy you influence, but not respect; it can buy you medicine, but not health. Despite the failure of money, power, pleasure, drink, drugs, or the host of other glittering distractions that promise peace and fulfillment but cannot deliver, we still scramble and claw to find our meaning in everything except Jesus and his purpose for us.

How did the crowd respond to Jesus? In verse 28 they asked, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” They wanted to do anything if only they could solve their bread problem. What did Jesus say? Look at verse 29. Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” They had a fixed idea that they must work for bread. This idea is ingrained in human beings. Many work so hard for bread that they sacrifice their family members, not to mention their faith in God. Jesus really wanted to liberate mankind from this mentality. What God wants from us first and foremost is not some kind of work, but to believe in Jesus Christ and have the life of God in our souls. We can understand working hard to change our situation. But Jesus wants us to work hard to change our hearts. This is not easy. Even though we believe in God, we must struggle to believe what God says, and what he did for us in sending Jesus as our Savior. It can be hard work. We want to live according to the pattern of the world, like everyone else. But we must know that the work God requires is to learn to live by faith in God’s word, and by faith in God’s Son. Even though everyone else is pursuing the comforts and conveniences of a materialistic life, we must first struggle to please God through obedience to his commands and faith in his promise.

What Jesus said was simple enough. The crowd needed to accept Jesus as the Messiah sent by God. That was all. But they were not willing to accept him. They claimed that they needed a miraculous sign. When the crowd wanted Jesus to give them a miraculous sign, they had a specific miracle in mind. They wanted Jesus to provide bread from heaven like Moses did. To strengthen their demand, they quoted from Exodus 16:4. But they only mentioned a key phrase, “bread from heaven.” The entire verse says, “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.’” In the context of God’s purpose for Israel, God was using the bread problem to train his people. But the crowd was twisting Scripture according to their own desire. They imagined that God gave bread from heaven while the Israelites enjoyed a comfortable life. This was not true. Their wilderness training was difficult. God used their bread problem to train them in faith, especially in keeping the Sabbath. God still uses the bread problem today to train his people. However, the crowd, in their desperate desire to get bread from Jesus, ignored God’s purpose. They ignored God. Thus, they were terrible Bible students. How did Jesus help them?

Jesus reminded them that it was not Moses, but God who gave them bread from heaven. Bible study must be God-centered. When they let their own desire color their understanding of God’s word they missed the point. Jesus also taught them what is the true bread from heaven. They thought of manna. But Jesus said in verse 33, “For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” The bread of God is not material. It is a person. Jesus came down from heaven to give life to men. Jesus humbled himself from his heavenly throne to be a man, God in the flesh. Jesus did this to give himself to us, that through him we might have life. The crowd did not simply accept Jesus' words. They did not listen to Jesus. They only picked up what they wanted to hear, especially the word “bread,” and said, “Sir, from now on give us this bread.”

Look at verse 35. “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.’” In the midst of material abundance, there are many hungry and thirsty souls. Many are hungry for parent’s love. They are hungry for fame and wealth. They are hungry for a marriage partner. They are thirsty to fulfill human dreams. They are thirsty because they are drained and dehydrated by hard work. In North America it is hard to understand what it means to be hungry. But they say that hunger makes people most sorrowful. Hunger and thirst represent man’s tiredness and weariness. Why are they so tired and weary? The Bible says they are tired and weary because they carry the heavy burden of sin, and because they are in the severe torment of the devil, and because they are under the constant whipping of the devil. This kind of hunger and thirst cannot be stopped by eating delicious food or by drinking many drinks. Only Jesus can satisfy their souls because Jesus is the bread of life.

Look at verse 37. “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” Here two of the most important teachings in the Bible are stated; God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. By his one-sided grace, God himself approaches all people and moves their hearts and draws them to himself. But we must come to Jesus and believe in him. It means to surrender to him as Lord. Coming to Jesus is more than being present before him. It means to listen to his word and accept it. It means to trust in Jesus by faith. There are many people who hang around Jesus without coming to Jesus. They know enough about Jesus to make a decision of faith, but they are unwilling to surrender. Some worry about losing a boyfriend. Some worry about losing sinful pleasures. Some worry about working too hard or sacrificing too much. So they calculate and hesitate. The crowd was like this. They had seen Jesus but they were not willing to trust him.

Look at verse 40. “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.” “At the last day” is repeated 4 times in this passage. Why did Jesus talk about the last day when the crowds wanted bread now? Because the hope of the last day changes our thinking at present. When we believe that we will be raised at the last day, we will not focus only on the bread that spoils. When we believe that we will be raised again at the last day, we will not focus only on present problems. Steve Jobs said, “If today was the last day of my life, would I want to do what I’m about to do today?”

As we know, eating is necessary. Likewise, if you want eternal life, eating is necessary. You can’t just come. You can’t just admire. People do this all the time; I have a lot of respect for Jesus. You can’t just come and admire. You have to eat and feed on Jesus, which is to believe fully. But eating is in response to hunger. The people who eat are the people who are hungry. What is hunger? It is the aching of the heart of one who knows he is empty. That is the work of the Holy Spirit to make the heart hungry. That is where the Father starts to draw. The hungry heart sees the bread. By the way, eating is personal. It is not a group event. We can all go out to dinner, but the food has to go in your mouth. Lots of people can do lots of things for you. They can come over and change the curtains, fix the room. People can do a lot of things to help you. But eating has to be done by you. Someone else cannot do that for you. Eating is personal and eating is transformational. If you don’t eat physically, you will die. If you eat, food you take in transforms you, and that is what Christ does. There is a saying, “You are what you eat.” By feeding on Jesus, we become like Jesus.

Let’s feed on the bread of life, Jesus, by meditating on his word every day.