



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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TITLE: Two Kinds of Bread

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: Jesus calls us beyond our most basic needs for food, clothing and shelter, and offers to meet our deepest needs.

SCRIPTURE: John 6:24-35

Today's scripture lesson comes from the Gospel of John, chapter 6, verses 24 to 35.

Starting at verse 24:

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

Jesus answered, "I assure you: You are looking for Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.

Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal of approval on Him."

"What can we do to perform the works of God?" they asked.

Jesus replied, "This is the work of God—that you believe in the One He has sent."

“What sign then are You going to do so we may see and believe You?” they asked. “What are You going to perform?”

Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”

Jesus said to them, “I assure you: Moses didn’t give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the real bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Then they said, “Sir, give us this bread always!”

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again.

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!

-- I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!

Earlier in this chapter, we see Jesus and His disciples with a large group of men, women and children. They discuss how they are going to feed such a large group and then a little boy gave Jesus a few loaves of bread and a few fishes, and Jesus used that little bit of food to feed thousands of people. The crowd liked that. They liked that a lot! It was a free lunch and a great Happening—and a good time was had by all!

Then Jesus slipped away from the crowd. When the crowd noticed that he was gone, they decided to track him down—and track him down they did. They got into their boats and went a-searching. But when they finally tracked him down, Jesus didn't seem too pleased. He said,

"Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me,
not because you saw signs,
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."

Jesus was telling the people that they had missed the point! They had seen him feed people with bread and fish, but he had more to offer than bread and fish. They had seen him fill bellies, but life is more than a full belly. He said,

"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."

When we hear that, a part of us says, "Yes!" Tell it to them, Jesus! You have something more important than bread and fish! Way more important! Don't let them settle for anything small or trivial. Guide them to a larger vision! Inspire them to raise their sights! Help them to focus on that which is really important!

But a part of us says, Jesus, we understand what you are trying to do. We understand that you are trying to get these people to see something larger—something greater—something far more wonderful than they have imagined. And yet, Jesus, we also understand where they are coming from! We understand their concern for bread. After all, everyone needs bread. We have to put bread on the table for our families. It isn't easy to put bread on the table.

Sixty years ago, most families had one bread-winner, and they managed to put bread on the table—and a car in the garage—and toys under the tree. Today most families have two bread-winners, and we still struggle to pay the bills. It seems like we work twice as hard—but have not much to show for it. It seems like we are running in place. While we aren't making much progress, we dare not slow down. So don't be too hard on people who come looking for bread, Jesus, because we understand them. We understand their struggle. We understand their pain. You gave them bread, and that helped. You can't blame them for coming back for more!

The fact is that we often come to Jesus asking for bread too! Our prayers reveal what we think about Jesus. Prayer has so much potential, but we use so little of it. Someone has observed that we can use the word Acts to learn prayer's full potential. Acts is an acrostic.

- A stands for Adoration. Our prayers should include adoration and praise for God.
- C stands for Confession. We should confess our sins before God.
- T stands for Thanksgiving. Who among us has nothing for which we can give thanks!
- S stands for Supplication. Supplication is asking. It includes prayers for ourselves, and it also includes our prayers for others. We don't have any trouble asking. Our prayers often consist of little else.

It would be a good spiritual exercise for us to remember A C T S. It would be a good spiritual exercise for us to go through that little checklist when we say our prayers. It would be a good spiritual exercise to include adoration of God in our prayers—and confession—and thanksgiving—and then, finally, asking—asking not just for ourselves but for others.

But what do our prayers usually include? Do they include adoration? No! Do they include confession? Probably not! Do they include thanksgiving? Not very often! Do they include supplication? Do they ever! Lord, give me this and Lord, give me that! Lord, help me with this and Lord, help me with that! But does our supplication, our asking, include anything for our neighbor—for the other person. If not, it should!

Guru Bhagwan Shree once said, "If you (Americans) came face to face with God, you'd ask Him for a Chevrolet." That about says it, doesn't it! If we came face to face with God, we wouldn't fall down in awe of God's holiness and power. We wouldn't seek his wisdom. We wouldn't ask him to help us to change the direction of our lives. We would just ask him for a Chevrolet—or a Lexus—or a promotion—or a new job—or a house with better plumbing—or we might pray that the wild oats we have sown might not bear fruit.

I would be remiss if I gave you the impression that we should not ask God for the ordinary things that are on our hearts. We worry about money—and food—and shelter—and clothing—and jobs—and

children—and health—and a host of other things. We should bring all these concerns to God. Just as a mother wants to hear a child's smallest concerns, so God wants to hear ours. After all, Jesus fed the crowd with bread and fish. He taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

But now, in our Gospel lesson, Jesus calls us to receive an even greater gift. "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life." He calls us to see that there is also more to life than bread—than our next meal—than a full belly. He calls us to spend a little less time making a living and a little more time making a life.

Sometimes we get so caught up in our struggle to put food on the table that we lose sight of the fact that there is more to life. Sometimes we work so hard for our money that we begin to believe that more money means more happiness. There is some sense in which that is true. If you are having to send your children to bed hungry, more money would relieve the children's aching stomachs and your aching heart. If you are having to watch the bank repossess your car, more money would put wheels under you again.

But, beyond a certain point, more money does not equal more happiness.

Some years ago, *Smart Business* magazine had an article entitled, "Wretched Excess: \$300,000 watches and other toys of the super rich." The article told about Joan Indursky DeFuria and Dr. Stephen Goldbart—therapists at the Money, Meaning, and Choices Institute in Silicon Valley. They helped people to deal with the woes of sudden riches. They call it *sudden wealth syndrome*. DeFuria says, "We see people who have a lot of money—\$5 million, \$10 million, \$150 million—they've got all this money and they've got titles, they go on fantastic trips, and after a while they realize they aren't happy and they can't figure out why."

Jesus says, "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."

Most of us have not experienced sudden wealth, and it is difficult for us to imagine that money cannot buy happiness. How can someone be rich and unhappy? We know it is possible, but it seems so unlikely. But it happens! It happens every day!

So Jesus says, "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."

Philip Yancey is an author—a highly successful author. He writes religious books so he probably isn't getting rich, but they are wonderful books. If you haven't read Philip Yancey, you owe it to yourself to try one of his books. In one of his books, Yancey talks about the different kinds of people that he has interviewed. He divides them into two categories: Stars and Servants.

The Stars include movie stars, NFL football players, television personalities, and the like. Yancey talks about how we look up to them—how we envy them—how we would love to be just like them. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be a Star! But Yancey says that the Stars whom he has interviewed are far from happy. In fact, he says that they "are as miserable a group of people as I have ever met." They are often divorced. They are heavily dependent on their psychotherapists. They are full of self-doubt.

Then Yancey talks about the Servants—people who have dedicated their lives to serving other people, often among terrible poverty in the far corners of the world. Yancey says, "I was prepared to honor and

admire these Servants.... I was not, however, prepared to envy them. But as I now reflect on the two groups side by side, Stars and Servants, the Servants clearly emerge as the favored ones, the graced ones. They work for low pay, long hours, and no applause, 'wasting' their talents and skills among the poor and uneducated. But somehow in the process of losing their lives they have found them." (found in Philip Yancey's book, *"Where is God When It Hurts?"* On page 45)

The crowds came to Jesus looking for a free lunch, and Jesus called them to something greater. He said, **"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."**

We, too, come to Jesus with our wish list, and Jesus calls us to something greater. **"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."** We fear that if we do not devote our lives to getting bread that we will starve. The irony is that the more fervently we devote our lives to bread—and to the things that money can buy—the less satisfied we feel.

Jesus promises that, if we will accept the gift of eternal life that he wants to give us, we will find ourselves, for the first time in our lives, truly filled.

The hymn, "Break Thou the Bread of Life," came out of the Chautauqua Movement of the late 1800s. While the Chautauqua Institution still enrolls some 8,000 students a year in various summer courses, most people know nothing about it. That was hardly the case in its heyday. Theodore Roosevelt called Chautauqua "the most American thing in America." During World War I, Woodrow Wilson deemed it an "integral part of the national defense."

The Chautauqua Movement was founded in 1874 on the shores of Chautauqua Lake in New York State by a Methodist layman, Lewis Miller, and a Methodist pastor (later bishop), John Vincent. Known originally as the Chautauqua Lake Sunday School Assembly, it was intended to be a summer training program for Sunday school teachers, but quickly expanded to include a wide variety of classes and entertainments—even Broadway plays, operas, and (gasp!) movies.

Mary Lathbury, a commercial artist, enjoyed visiting Chautauqua during the summer. John Vincent asked her to write a hymn to be sung at Chautauqua Bible studies. While "Break Thou the Bread of Life" is often used as a communion hymn today, Mary wrote it originally to honor Jesus as the "bread of life" and the "living Word" of God, (in verse 1). It is a fitting accompaniment to Bible studies, because it prays that we will be able to move "beyond the sacred page"—meaning the Bible—to the "living Word"—Christ himself. It prays for Christ's blessing, (in verse 2) so that we might be freed from everything that would bind us so that we might find peace. Even though this hymn was written more than a century ago, the peace to which it aspired is a peace that we still need today.

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!