

Theme: “Bread Cravings”

John 6:25-35 (EHV)

[The day after Jesus’ miraculous feeding of the 5000]

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” ²⁶ Jesus answered them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.” ²⁸ So they said to him, “What should we do to carry out the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent.” ³⁰ Then they asked him, “So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” ³² Jesus said to them, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴ “Sir,” they said to him, “give us this bread all the time!” ³⁵ “I am the Bread of Life,” Jesus told them. “The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Have you ever been on a “low-carb” diet? It’s the type of diet that usually has you cut down on eating carbohydrates (starches and sugars, etc.) and encourages eating more protein and fiber. Well, one of the items you are usually required to cut out, or at least cut way back on, in this type of diet is bread. Well, if you’ve ever tried this kind of a diet, you probably know that especially for the first few days you experience some pretty severe “bread cravings.” Our bodies get so used to eating the yeast and sugars found in bread and other foods that when we take that away our bodies actually physically *crave* it like a drug! It can be a very difficult thing to get through. I tried this kind of diet a number of years ago and only lasted for a few weeks. I felt really fatigued and light-headed the whole time. I just couldn’t do it. When I told one of my sisters that I’d tried that kind of diet she said, “Nope, not me. I’d rather die than not eat bread!” Now maybe we wouldn’t go that far, but I’m sure many of us share a similar love of eating bread.

Well, does our craving for physical bread match our craving for “spiritual” bread? Do you have **“Bread Cravings”** for the “Bread of Life,” Jesus Christ? What do we crave more: feeding our bellies, or feeding our souls?

The people of our text for today probably wouldn’t have done too well on a low-carb diet. Their craving for physical bread was just about out of control. When they found Jesus the day after He had fed the 5000 men with just five loaves of barely bread and two small fish (**cf. John 6:1-15**) it’s obvious that they weren’t seeking Him to have their souls fed and hear Him teach them again, but rather Jesus tells them what was really in their hearts, **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled” (v. 26)**. What’s even worse is that even though these people had just witnessed Jesus’ miraculous feeding of thousands of people they still demand a miraculous sign from Jesus. **Then they asked him, “So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform?” (v. 30)**.

That is the tragedy of unbelief, and that is the danger of turning Jesus into simply our “bread king”—we’ll never be satisfied. The unbelieving heart’s demand for more “proof” will never be met, no matter how many miracles it witnesses, and the heart that seeks Jesus for earthly reasons will never have its belly filled. That is why Jesus instructed the people who had gathered around Him, **“Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.” (v. 27)**. Even if God were to send manna from heaven, like He did for the Children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness (**cf. Exodus 16:2-15**) the people would have eventually gotten hungry again. That bread was temporary and would spoil if left for more than a day. That bread could preserve life, but it couldn’t give it or

create it. In contrast, Jesus said to them, "**My Father gives you the real bread from heaven.**"³³ **For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world"** (v. 32-33). The people's response to Jesus' words sounded good, "**Sir," they said to him, "give us this bread all the time!"**" (v. 34). But from what we read in the rest of this chapter of John, it seems as if they're still just thinking about physical bread and the thought of never growing physically hungry again. Jesus then had to make it very clear to them that He was speaking of the spiritual life that only He can give: "**I am the Bread of Life," Jesus told them. "The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty."**" (v. 35).

Are we as misguided and blinded as the people in our text? Do we view the physical and material things God blesses us with as the ultimate blessings from God? Do we only have *physical* "**Bread Cravings**"? Jesus reminds us in our text, "**Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you**" (v. 27). Jesus put it another way in the Gospel of Matthew, "**Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.**"²⁰ **But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.**"²¹ **Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**" (Matthew 6:19-21 EHV).

Where is our heart set? On earthly bread? Or on heaven? That treasure, that "**bread of life**" (v. 35) is right here in our Bibles waiting for each one of us to eat of it! We know it's good for us. We know there are blessings just waiting to be received in there. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "**Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart**" (Jeremiah 15:16). The Psalmist writes, "**How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!**" (Psalm 119:103). And yet, how often don't we go for days, maybe even weeks (or longer!) without "eating" from this "**food that endures to eternal life**" (v. 27)? We wouldn't dream of going for even a day, much less weeks without *physically* eating. We know what would happen to us. We'd get weak, our body would begin to shrink and shut down, and our health would deteriorate. So what do you think is going to happen to us if we aren't *spiritually* eating from the Word of God? We certainly aren't going to get healthier or stronger. We aren't going to grow closer to God either. No, we are going to get weak, our faith will begin to shrink and deteriorate little by little.

What is the answer? Start eating! Just as good daily nutrition is essential to maintaining good physical health, so also feeding our souls *daily* on the "**bread of life**" (v. 35) is essential to maintaining good *spiritual* health. How do you think our bodies have gained such a physical craving for bread? Well, by eating lots of bread, of course! Our body begins to expect it and crave it. In the same way we can develop a healthy "**Bread Craving**" in a *spiritual* sense by constantly feeding on Jesus, the "**Bread of Life.**" The more we read and spiritually digest the Word of Christ, the more we will crave it; the more our hunger will grow.

And yet, at the same time Jesus promises that our hunger and thirst will be completely and forever satisfied: "**I am the Bread of Life.**" He tells us, "**The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.**" (v. 35). When our starving souls hear from the very words of Jesus that our sins are washed away by His shed blood, that His cross takes away all the guilt from our consciences, and all the shame from our hearts then our souls are truly filled and at rest. When our weary souls hear from the very words of Jesus that because He lives, we will live also eternally in the mansions He is preparing for us in heaven (**cf. John 14:3, 19**) then our souls are content and at peace. When our own souls are fed the very body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper; given and shed for each one of us for the forgiveness of our sins, then our souls are truly satisfied. We are satisfied daily in Jesus through His Word, and through the miracle of His Sacrament. There is nothing else that can be added to the spiritual meal we have been given in Jesus, the "**Bread of Life!**" We are complete in Him (**Colossians 2:10**); completely saved and completely satisfied!

May we never willingly put ourselves on a bread-free *spiritual* diet! May God give us His Spirit so that we always have "**Bread Cravings**" for Jesus, the "**Bread of Life**" so that we may say with a sincere heart of faith, "**Lord, give us this bread always!**" (v. 34). Amen.