

INTRODUCTION

I want to thank all of you who had a part of hosting RENEW last Thursday night. Thank you to all the staff who were on duty helping, thank you for all of our ushers, greeters, worship hosts, security team members. Andrew Palau told me over and over what a great host all of you were. I'm proud of you! He said he has never seen a church as well organized as ours. Give yourself a hand!

A guy cut his thumb in his workshop so he drove down to the local emergency room. When he walked in he found himself in a hall with two doors, one marked "Adults" and other "Children." So, he went through the Adults door and found himself in another hall with two doors. One door said, "Above the waist" and the other door said, "Below the waist." He was holding his cut thumb up, so he went through the door marked, "Above the waist." He found himself in another hall with two doors. One door said, "Internal" and the other door said, "External." So he walked through the door that said external. He found himself in another hall with two doors. One said, "Major injury" and the other read, "Minor injury." So he walked through the door marked "minor" and found himself standing back out in the parking lot.

So he got back in his car and drove home. His wife said, "Did you get any help at the hospital?" He said, "No, I didn't get any help, but I have never seen something that was so organized!"

It takes more than organization. I'm afraid there are some people who go to a church, and they find it well organized, but they leave without getting help. The good news about Green Acres is that we are organized and Jesus the Great Physician is IN residence here. I'm not talking about this building—that's not the church. *We* are the church. You don't go to church, you *are* the church!

A couple of weeks ago we talked about how Jesus came walking on the water in the middle of a dark and stormy night and calmed the fears of the disciples. He told them, "I am is here." That name "I am" is the name God told Moses to use when He sent him to Egypt. Jesus laid claim to that name. If I walked up to you and said, "I am." You'd wait for a second and you'd say, "You are what? Or you are who?" But if I said, "I am I am." I would just be repeating myself. But when Jesus said, "I am I am." He was making a theological claim. "I am God!" He is the great I am. In addition, in this account in the Gospel of John, there are seven times when Jesus says, "I am something."

In this message we'll learn what Jesus meant when He said:

1. I am The Bread of Life.
2. In John 8 He says, "I am the Light of the World."
3. In chapter 10 He says, "I am the door or the gate for the sheep."
4. In that same chapter He says, "I am the good shepherd, not like those hired shepherds who run off when there's danger."
5. In John 11 at the tomb of Lazarus Jesus tells Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life."

6. In John 14 He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."
7. And in John 15 He says, "I am the True Vine." That's where the local brewery got its name. Jesus is the Great I Am.

Before we read our scripture, just remember that in the first part of John 6, Jesus fed 5,000 people with a few muffins and minnows. It was an all-you-can-eat feast. So that's why we are going to see that the mob is following Him.

John 6:22-35 CSB: "The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw there had been only one boat. They also saw that Jesus had not boarded the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone off alone. Some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 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, "Truly I tell 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 ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true 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."

We're going to skip the next few verses and come back to them next week, because they have some amazing truth about salvation and I need another week to unpack it all. So skip down to verse 47.

John 6:47-60 CSB. "Truly I tell you, anyone who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

At that, the Jews argued among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

So Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the manna your ancestors ate—and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever."

He said these things while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Therefore, when many of his disciples heard this, they said, "This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?"

You may still be shaking your head wondering, "Wow. All that language about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. That's a little over the edge for me." Well imagine if you had been there hearing it in person. In verse 66 it says the people were so offended that the mob turned away and left Jesus. The crowd melted away like snow under a hot sun. After He fed them the day before, they wanted to make Him king. Now they thought He was a kook. In less than 24 hours He went from hero to zero.

To understand what Jesus said, you have to move from the physical to the spiritual. You have to move from the literal to the symbolic. Jesus isn't literal bread giving us physical life: He is spiritual bread giving us eternal life. So what did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the Bread of Life?" I want to show you how Jesus is like bread, and how He is like manna.

I. Jesus is like bread because He satisfies our deepest need.

This mob was looking for another free meal. And Jesus said, "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." (John 6:35 CSB)

Jesus was a great teacher because He used simple concepts to teach profound truth. Bread is the most common food on the planet. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give this day our daily bread." When someone works at a paying job we say they do that to put bread on the table. We all understand the need for bread. Jesus pointed out that we have two kinds of hunger.

A. We all have physical hunger for food that spoils.

We live in a hungry world. Every creature has an open mouth wanting to be fed. From the baby bird in the nest to the eagle soaring in the sky; from the minnow in the creek to the whale in the ocean; from the mouse nibbling on a crumb to the mighty elephant in jungle; every creature

has to be fed. In fact, most creatures in the animal world devote most of their lives to finding food.

But physical food only satisfies us temporarily. That's why we have to keep eating. And some physical food can perish. That's why we label some food as perishable and some food as non-perishable food. But even the nonperishable foods have shelf lives, or dates when the freshness expires. So the bottom line for physical hunger is that we have to keep eating to stay satisfied.

B. We all have a spiritual hunger for food that endures.

As a human being we have a different kind of hunger than any other created animals. We are born with a spiritual hunger, a longing to know our Creator. We have a spiritual thirst to be refreshed in our innermost being.

Blaise Pascal was a French mathematician and philosopher who lived in the 1600s. He had a dramatic conversion experience when he was an adult and spent the rest of his life writing about His faith. He wrote that in the heart of every person there is a deep longing for true happiness. Our American Declaration of Independence declares that this is one of our God-given rights, not happiness, but the pursuit of happiness. We try to satisfy this longing for true happiness in many different ways. But Pascal came to this powerful conclusion. "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled with any created thing, but by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

The Bible is full of the stories of people who were seeking something and they found that true satisfaction can only be found in a loving relationship with our Creator. David sang, "As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for you Oh God." (Psalm 42:1 CSB) "Who do I have in heaven but you? And I desire nothing on earth but you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever." (Psalm 73:25-26 CSB)

I love that little chorus we sing sometimes that says, "You're all I need. You're all I need. Jesus, you're all I need."

II. Jesus is like manna because He saves us from the worst fate.

The Jews considered manna to be bread from Heaven. They said, "Moses gave our ancestors bread from Heaven. Jesus corrected them. He said, "Truly I tell you, Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6:32-33 CSB)

When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, they could have died from hunger, because there wasn't any food source in the desert. So, God gave them manna from heaven to eat. In Exodus 16 we read that manna appeared every morning like dew on the ground. It was white and round and tasted like wafers made with honey. Think of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes— they're great! The word "manna" in Hebrew means, "What is this?" It's like when they woke up

the first morning, they looked out and saw the ground covered with frosted flakes. They said, "man hu?" "What's this?" So that's what they named it.

We read in the book of Numbers that the people ate manna every day for forty years. They got so tired of manna that they complained about it. There are only so many ways you can cook manna. You can bake it grill it and boil it—but it's still manna. They probably made bamanna bread or of course, when they felt like Italian food they made manna cotti. Manna is a picture of Jesus. Notice four ways Jesus is like manna.

A. Manna came from heaven.

Jesus said, "Yes, your ancestors ate manna—and they died." The manna from heaven only kept them from starving to death in the wilderness. Then Jesus said, "I am the bread from heaven that gives eternal life." Starving to death is a terrible fate. But there is something worse than starving to death. The very worst fate would be to spend eternity separated from God in a place called Hell. Jesus came to deliver us from that.

I've met people who said they came from a lot of different places, people who said they came from Canada, Africa, Oklahoma, and Alabama. But Jesus is the only person who ever walked the planet who made the audacious claim that He came down from Heaven.

B. Manna was free.

The Israelites didn't have to grow or make the manna. God gave it to them. They didn't have to pay for it, or earn it. They didn't deserve it. It was a gift from God. Salvation through Jesus is a free gift.

A lot of people think they can be saved by good works. If you ask the average Joe or Josephine on the street how to get to heaven, they will usually say something like, "By being good or doing good." In verse 29 Jesus said there is only one work you need to perform for eternal life and that is to believe in Him. That's all you need to do.

In Acts 16, the jailer asked Paul a question that all of us should be asking: "What must I DO to be saved?" Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." He believed, and in that instance, that Roman soldier received eternal life.

One of the most important truths of the Bible is found in Romans 6:23. It's the ultimate Bad News/Good News. It says, "The wages of sin is death; [That's the bad news; here's the good news.] But the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."

C. Manna had to be received.

God didn't put the manna straight into their mouths. It appeared on the ground every morning, and they had to go out and gather it up. And the manna didn't nourish them until they opened their mouths and received it into their bodies. There's a powerful principle here.

You must receive Jesus before you experience eternal life. The Bible says in John 1:12 CSB: "But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be^[a] children of God, to those who believe in his name."

You can believe all the facts about Jesus and still be lost. Christianity isn't about believing a creed; it's all about receiving a Savior. I'll demonstrate this as I conclude this message.

D. Manna had to be replenished.

This food was supernatural because it had a miraculous nature about it. The manna was supplied every day, but it couldn't be stored up. If they tried to save it, it would become rotten overnight. The exception to this was on the Sabbath. God told them to collect twice as much manna on Friday morning so they wouldn't have to work on Saturday morning. That day's manna miraculously lasted through the Sabbath. And the Bible tells us that inside the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, there was a bowl of manna that had stayed fresh for generations. It was miracle food.

What a powerful picture of salvation. Salvation is a miracle from heaven. When you receive Jesus, you are saved. You don't need to be saved again every day. But, like manna, you do need to be fed on the Word of God every day to stay spiritually healthy. One of the most popular devotional guides is even called *Our Daily Bread*.

CONCLUSION

So I've tried to explain in words what it means to eat the bread of life. But I think the best way for you to understand it is see it visually. So I need a helper. Is there anyone here who is hungry? Come up on stage, John. I'd like to give you a piece of bread. Would you like to eat this? No? I don't blame you, it may look like a piece of bread, but it's a rock. Instead, why don't you try this roll? Okay, that's better. Is that good? Did it satisfy your hunger?

So let me try to explain in the simplest terms what it means to receive Jesus. It's like eating bread. First, you have to BELIEVE that the bread is bread—you have to trust it. The world will offer you plenty of things that claim to be what you need to satisfy your deepest needs but anything or anyone who isn't Jesus is like that rock. It may look like bread, but don't eat it or you'll be sorry.

Second, you have to RECEIVE the bread. You have to ingest it. You don't really demonstrate that you believe it is bread until you actually take it in your mouth and chew it and swallow it. In the same sense, you must receive Jesus into your heart by faith.

Finally, you ALLOW the bread to strengthen you. What happens to bread when you eat it? The enzymes in your stomach break it down into different proteins and these proteins are sent to the cells of your body and that digested bread literally becomes a part of you. It nourishes you and gives you strength and energy to do physical tasks. It is true that you become what you eat.

And when you receive the Bread of Life you allow Jesus to change you and strengthen you. He doesn't just want to be a part of your life. Just as the bread you eat becomes you, Jesus wants to live in you and BE your life.

So let me circle back and land on why Jesus was so forceful in His analogy. He moved from saying, "I am the Bread of Life" to demanding that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. The people were so offended that they left. On the surface that sounds like an offensive demand. But He was saying, "All of who I am must become all of who you are. I want my life to be your life." Whose blood was flowing in the veins of Jesus? It was the blood of the Creator. Whose flesh was it? It was the flesh of the Creator: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus was offering for us to have God's very life inside of us.

Have you consumed the bread of life?

Today there are a lot of people who are interested in a little of Jesus, but they aren't willing to consume all of who He is. You see you can't just dabble with Jesus. Our country is full of people who say, "you know I tried Jesus, but that didn't work for me." Or "I tried church, but I just lost interest." I would say to those people, "No, you dabbled with Jesus. You tasted a little Jesus, but you didn't sell out and eat His flesh and drink His blood. Because when you do that He changes you and you are never again the same.

So stop feeding on the junk food of the world and put yourself on a steady diet of the Bread of Life.

OUTLINE

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- B. Manna was free.
- C. Manna had to be received.
- D. Manna had to be replenished.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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