

Eat Forever Bread

- ✦ **Raised on the Last Day (vv.35-40)**
- ✦ **Life eternal now – believe! (vv.41-51)**

In the name of Jesus, God's *Forever Bread* from heaven, dear hungry souls:

Doesn't it seem like "bread" has come on hard times? A famous Medieval preacher observed that everybody loves bread; you can always eat more of it. Remember those great Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners? Wasn't it wonderful if you were asked to finish off the last of the rolls? Especially with real butter to pack into your hot thumb print on top. Now gluten is the enemy? Walking through an eastern suburb, there by a restaurant, was a delivery truck painted with large letters: G-L-U-T-E-N. Ever try to make your own bread? Knead it and knead it and knead it some more, but it still won't rise! We went from "Wonder Bread" in my youth to "Ezekiel Bread," coarse enough to kill hunger. I'm glad Jesus is talking about something far better today: ***Eat Forever Bread***. Then Jesus will see that you are...

✦ **Raised on the Last Day (vv.35-40)**

This whole sixth chapter of John is about bread. They did not have enough in that remote spot on the far side of Galilee to feed a hundred people, much less five thousand men, plus women and children. It seems only one person in the entire crowd thought about bringing some lunch. A boy with five barley loaves and two small fish. Jesus proved He is not only full of compassion, but also power. He blessed and broke and had His disciples distribute. Maybe you've heard. Everyone ate plenty and wasted nothing because the disciples filled twelve baskets with pieces left over. Wasn't that a ***miraculous sign***?

It was dark so the crowds could not see in the wee hours of the morning when Jesus was walking on the water across the lake. He had to console His disciples, terrified He was a ghost. ***"It is I. Do not be afraid!"*** Another sign: ***Immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.*** (v. 21 EHV¹)

Remember why Jesus had to send the crowds away? Why He had to make His disciples get into the boat and get going? Naturally, if you have a powerful person like Jesus who can walk on water and multiply bread and fish for thousands, He needs to be the King, right? He will certainly have the power to get rid of the hated Roman invaders. And why would anyone refuse such popularity?

It's baffling how blind we humans can be. What's the hardest place to find anything? Right in front of you! Or as one elderly member used to say, "Happiness is finding your glasses when you still remember what you were looking for."

Likewise Jesus' fellow Jews! They're seriously criticizing Jesus after all of the above by asking, ***"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) Then they launch into memories of manna in the wilderness with Moses 1500 years earlier. (Recall last Sunday's First Reading from Exodus 16.) Isn't that like us worrying about school starting or scheduling sports, Catechism, adult BIC? Jesus always works these things out.

It's amazing how patient Jesus is, how on-point with His mission. First, He corrects them that God, not Moses gave them that "What-is-it?" ***Manna – bread from heaven***. So they request some of that ***Forever Bread***. And then one of those great *I AM* statements of Jesus as the eternal God: ***"I AM the Bread of Life...The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will***

¹ EHV ~ Evangelical Heritage Version (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

never be thirsty.” More precisely, *the one coming to me, or the one who keeps coming to me....* Gone the hunger. Gone the thirst. And this must be special eating and drinking because Jesus says, **“The one who believes in me.”** We “eat” and “drink” Jesus with our eyes and ears and believing hearts.

But they’re not satisfied with that. Are we? They’ve been demanding some other miraculous sign to see and believe, but Jesus says, **“You have also seen me, and you do not believe.”** Jesus is the greatest miraculous sign ever! For God to come down to earth and become a human being like us is the most awesome miracle. What power to travel from heaven to earth! We can’t even reach the nearest planet Mars yet. (*National Geographic*: Six years? Osteoporosis landing there? Six more years back to body mush on planet earth?) What love to leave the surpassing joys and glory of heaven to come suffer here!

Jesus’ laser focus on our Father in heaven is unmatched. **“Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out.”** Don’t make this difficult. Just come to Jesus in His Word and keep coming with a humble, believing heart. Trust God’s power and love in Jesus. **“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me.”** In the next chapter Jesus will be heading into the danger zone again in Jerusalem. In only a matter of months, His last trip to Jerusalem will end on that bloody cross of shame. He has you and me in mind: **“And this is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me, but raise them up on the Last Day. For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the Last Day.”** God wants you there because Christ died for all. He obviously wants you because He made sure you heard this Good News again today. Trust in Him like a teenager grabbing that last dinner roll dripping with real butter – no plastic margarine! Christ miraculously came down from heaven, died as your Substitute, rose up alive from the grave. Now that He has ascended back to heaven, Jesus is more determined than ever for you to be **Raised on the Last Day.**

✦ Life eternal now – believe! (vv.41-51)

The Jews *grumbling* here reminds me of the Holy Spirit’s warning in last Sunday’s sermon: **“Let him who thinks he stands be careful that he does not fall.”** (1 Corinthians 10:12) God’s **Forever Bread** freely fills us, heart and soul. As we keep coming to God’s house, Jesus feeds us richly on His Word and sacrament. Do we grumble then about how it’s preached? About the musical settings of our worship? Are we too familiar with Jesus like those who knew His family and rejected Him as the Messiah? Jesus relieves our grumbling by giving us **Life eternal now.** His foolproof recipe: **believe!**

Humans want to contribute our way. Some use their intellect and their “science” to deny God or any afterlife. They ignore those models of human intelligence and ingenuity – the “unsinkable” *Titanic* or the high flying *Hindenburg*. Ah, but we’re more advanced now, right? Yet we can’t manage forest fires the way native Americans did before Columbus.² Can we contribute our own decision to believe?

Not according to Jesus: **“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the Last Day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. I am not saying that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God.”** Jesus **“is the one who has seen the Father.”** God’s **Forever Bread** is also **the Word.** **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (πρὸς) God, and the Word was God. He was with (πρὸς) God in the beginning.”** (1:1f) That’s intimacy like, “My wife and I have been *with* each other 40 years.” **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: The one who believes in me has eternal life.”** Not “will get,” but **has eternal life.** **Believe!** to “eat” **the Bread of Life.** **Your fathers ate manna...and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.**” To be sure keep coming to Jesus for the gift to **believe** and have **Life eternal now.** Miraculous **Forever Bread** – all Jesus. **Believe!** Amen.

² Charles C. Mann. *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus.* Knopf, 2005
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