

This is Not the Bread We Asked For

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[0 : 00] The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realised that the only boat had been there sorry, that only one boat had been there and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples but that they had gone away alone Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks Once the crowd realised that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus When they found him on the other side of the lake they asked him Rabbi, when did you get here?

Jesus answered I tell you the truth You are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill Do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you On him God the Father has placed a seal of approval Then they asked him What must we do to do the works of God that God requires?

Jesus answered The work of God in this is to believe in the one he has sent So they asked him What miraculous signs then will you give that they may see and believe you?

What will you do? Our forefathers ate manna in the desert as it is written He gave them bread from heaven to eat Jesus said to them I tell you the truth It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world Sir they said From now on give us this bread Then Jesus declared I am the bread of life He who comes to me He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never thirst But as I told you you have seen me and still you have seen me and you still do not believe

All that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never drive away For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me and this is the will of him who sent me that I shall lose none of all that has given me but raise them up on the last day for my Father will is that everyone who asks sorry everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have entered eternal life shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day This is the word of the Lord Thanks Corden

[4 : 10] For those of you who don't know me my name is Darren I'm part of the vestry here at St Silas and tonight we're going to look at something which is kind of a follow on directly not just in passage but what Matthew was sharing last week if you were here which you have this interaction with Jesus and a crowd of people where they seem to be missing each other quite a lot that they don't seem to be entirely on the same page and often for a lot of people that can be the way they think about faith that can be the way they think about life that there's this language and this experience of God that just seems to miss all the time and when we look at this passage tonight that could be just one reading there's a reading there of Jesus just gets increasingly obscure and the crowd get a bit frustrated but actually I think like all things Jesus is inviting us into a deeper view of ourselves a deeper view of reality and ultimately a deeper view of God oh sorry I put this timer on in case

I'm up here for 40 odd minutes which will not happen don't worry and he does this in many different ways and we're going to look at it in the four questions that he has posed the crowd posed Jesus a series of questions and so that's what I'd like to do tonight just go through those four questions and as Jesus unpacks the reality that they are missing a hope ultimately we engage with the reality he is pointing us each towards and in this you'll have this famous phrase of Jesus I am the bread of life and even at that point that's a very loaded term for the original Jewish audience because their understanding of God was shaped by Moses when he meets God in the burning bush and he says who are you and he says I am his name is reality his name is existence and Jesus is taking this language and seven times through the gospel of John he will say I am this I am this and this is the

first one in the gospel of John

I am the bread of life and like I am being reality Jesus is again showing us into a deeper reality also can you go on to the next slide has anybody seen this film oh man I always got hope one person great on the ball with culturally accurate analogies this is the hotly Oscar tipped three billboards outside Ebbing Missouri which is a fantastic film and it's due to win lots of awards so I went to see this a few weeks ago and what the film is about is about this woman on the left whose daughter has died and they never find the killer and she gets increasingly frustrated with her perception of the lack of activity from the local police so she hires these three billboards and puts up very provocative statements to try and shock the police into action and it follows her narrative through life as she tries to get answers from the police and the guy on the right is like the deputy and both and he is seeking like his he is seeking affirmation from the guy in the middle who's the chief of police and you have this journey of two characters who are both seeking something she wants answers and he wants to be a great cop but the point of the film is that the thing that's fueling what they want is actually something deeper it's a deeper reality this is a spoiler by the way so with the woman actually her desire for justice is just as much fueled by her guilt of what she was like as a mother and the fuel of the police officer to be a great cop is that the chief of police is like a father figure for him and he wants the father to say you're doing a good job and so they actually lead the film shows they make increasingly bad choices and increasingly destructive choices because the thing that they think they want is not actually the thing they need they're actually a bit blinded to the reality of a deeper desire and that is what I think

Jesus is getting at when he says I am the bread of life that the thing that you think that you want is not the thing that you need there's something deeper could you go on to the next slides please so we start with this group this group of people who are pursuing life they are pursuing Christ they are following Jesus because there's something about him there's something about his words that is captivating and they've been in this beat in this rhythm of seeing Jesus heal people and doing teaching and then they've just seen him feed thousands of people out of nowhere and they want more of this so this is a group of people who are seeking life so they come and they look for Jesus and they can't find him and so they have they notice the boat is gone so they go all the way over to the other side of the river and they find Jesus and they say quite a simple question where have you been how did you get here and he responds by essentially saying you're only here because you want more bread that feels like quite an abrupt quick answer to a pretty simple question where did you go now did they just catch Jesus on an off day was Jesus just a bit grumpy because he tried to get some time off and he had to feed the crowds and he eventually got some and they found him again because again

I think that would be a very tempting initial reading and it could be a reading which applies to my misunderstanding when I think of what it means to know God he has a certain limit of patience you can ask him a certain amount of things and eventually he just gets a bit sick and fed up of you but again I think he is cutting quite quickly to the heart of something deeper this is not Jesus by the end of this little passage will not leave room for a God who's fed up if anything it's about God who wants to take you deeper and I just go no no no you're missing the point of what I want and he says quite an interesting interesting to me anyway interesting thing about food that spoils or another translation of that is perish so in verses 25 26 and 27 Jesus answered very truly I tell you you were looking for me not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life which the son of man will give you for on him

[10 : 25] God the father has placed his seal of approval and he cuts straight to the heart of what they're doing there you've seen me do this stuff you've seen me do quite a lot of this stuff and that's really the only reason you're back here you want more of this stuff actually you've missed the point of what these signs were about these signs point to the person that God has put his sign of approval on yet you only really want more bread that's the only reason you've come back to find me it's quite an exposing place he suddenly puts the crowd and he has this idea that not only are they seeking him for bread actually they're working for something that will perish and it's quite an interesting combination of words you're working for this thing that will perish and that's one of the core issues Jesus targets in this passage is you're given all your energy and all their time working for something that will eventually go away it will spoil it will rot it will fail you he's talking to a group of people who are using all their energy and all their time to try and get something that ultimately will not work this is one of these places where if you think about the Bible being a 2,000 year old group

of stories to people who we know way more advanced of this sums up my culture too a group of people who are using all their energy and all their time to work for things that cannot last it will not last and Jesus just goes straight for that he's like you could hear this as a like a go away or you can hear this as

Jesus going stop working for this stuff that will not last it will perish stop looking for bread look for the thing behind the bread I don't know what it means for you to have a purpose in life or a fulfillment in life because again this is about people who are looking for something in Christ that gives them meaning what the equivalent of bread is for us what are the things that you think of when you think about life if I do these things it gives me meaning it gives me purpose if I don't have these things if I don't have a certain type of job or a certain type of relationship or a certain bank account balance or a certain type of fitness or a certain type of achievement then I am missing out and Jesus kind of is cutting right under all that and inviting into something deeper can you go on to the next slide please so they ask a second question in verses 28 what must I do to do the works God requires and Jesus answers the work of God is this to believe in the one who sent him they're the kind of things I love and find incredibly annoying about the gospels here's the thing you need to do believe it totally flips her little system upside down she's like you're busy working for all this stuff it's not going to last tell us what to do what's the thing we need to do and Jesus says believe what am I supposed to do with that I can't do something with belief what am I supposed to take that how would I apply that to my system and again I think this is very deliberate he is flipping up the way that they think the world works they think reality works we just work very hard you try and do a pile of things and if you do enough things you get the right results at the end and every now and then life will remind you you're not very much in control of things and we'll try and rebuild from that place and Jesus is saying there's again there's this reality under this that you're missing and he does say you know work for the things of God so that there's an understanding that they're just asking back based on what Jesus has said to them but he's inviting them into a different reality of where the things that you do will never achieve this thing that you're looking for it's actually about what you believe what you understand this world and this reality to be about do you believe in a reality where all you do is work really hard and you're in charge and you just keep going and hopefully if you do enough things at the right time you'll be okay and hopefully maybe even

God will be okay with you or do you rest in a belief system which the belief system Jesus came to show that your life is a gift and it's been given to you by God and therefore it's his he's the one that has the approval of the father that's how he starts in the previous set of answers and that invitation to believe is supposed to do totally goes against the grain of the way I think my life works and the way they think the world works I need to do something to keep everything on track even sometimes to keep God on side I need to do what I need to do what are the things I need to do and it throws this thing upside down it leaves me anyway feeling a bit exposed and like oh okay so I'm supposed to just stay here and believe believe in what I mean that's what Jesus will go on to talk about next but the work is not about doing the right things but believing that the things that we seek in working are found actually in what we believe and belief is not just a set of ideas I hope are very true one day but the very basis of the convictions of the way you think the world works the way we think reality is structured and Jesus walks into that and says you can work as much as you want but a lot of this stuff will fail you there's only one thing that won't fail you and that depends on what you believe the world to be about so they ask a third question in verse 30 so they ask him what sign will you give that we may see to see it and believe you what will you do our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness and it is written he gave them bread from heaven to eat now again

I know Matthew talked about this a little bit last week they're asking for signs when they've seen lots of signs and then they suddenly start talking about this thing called manna and if you don't know the context of what they're talking about it could be like listening to me talking about three billboards outside Ebbing Missouri a film you've never seen and you're like what is he talking about so it could be very similar here so they're referring to a passage in Exodus which is foundational to who the people of Israel understand their nation to be and who their identity is that God intervened in world history to take a group of people for himself and say you're mine take you out of slavery and they have this thing that starts to shape who they know themselves to be and who God is and when they get into the desert they have this song where they go out in Exodus 15 of celebration of who God is and how amazing he is and how powerful he is and how great he is and then the next chapter they're complaining they have another song about how it would be better if they just went back to

Egypt because at least there they had bread if nothing else they had bread so for 40 years they have this daily miracle where God provides bread every day for 60 well on the sixth day he gave them double the portion so they didn't have to do it on the

[17 : 35] Sunday Saturday and it's a miracle where every day God comes and meets their physical need and they say well come on essentially they're saying look so Moses did this for us what are you going to do to prove who you are and again Jesus is pointing back to the exact same idea that he's already talking to them about the bread was never the point the bread was to point you to the person who gave you the bread and gave you life in the first place and in Greek they have two words for the word life they have bios which is more like if I ran into a room and said is he alive you would use the word bios it's like the physical bios connected to biology where we understand how life works but if I said how is life going I might use the word zoe which is to do with the quality of life to do with the depth of life to do with the experience of life and that is the word Jesus is using when he says seek life he's not saying seek bios seek the things that help you just continue to operate as a human seek the life that is about the fullness of who you are that includes your physical health also but is more than that it's the entirety of who you have been made to be

Jesus says the eternal zoe is found in him he goes on to say in verse 32 very truly I tell you it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven but it's my father who gives you the true bread from heaven for the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives zoe to the world and they want that so their next question is sorry that was like can put the next slide up in verse 34 sir always give us this bread yeah give us that bread what is that bread we want some of that but again Jesus seems to point that they haven't really got it again because it's like saying alright what is what is manna 2.0 this is like an extra special type of bread where could we get are you going to give us that like manna that went even further than what we got in the desert and again his reply would say no there's a quote up here from Soren

Kierkegaard who is a Danish nobody's nodding or shaking their head he's a Danish philosopher who says this is the normal state of the human heart to try and build this identity around something beside God we look to tons of things to give us zoe tons of things to give us depth of meaning of life don't we and that's partly it's natural to the human reality to do that we look at things we look at people we look at jobs we look at tons of different things to say this will give me depth of meaning this will give me a grounding in reality that gives me a purpose to be here in the world and the only way we ever really know to do that is by comparing ourselves our ego is constantly busy comparing ourselves to those around about us and when Jesus says this will perish this way of living where you look to bread to give you something it was never designed to do it starts to make a lot of sense why he's engaging with the crowd this way

I don't think he's just trying to be problematic I don't think he's trying to just be deceptive or angry or dismissive he is trying to challenge the way they think their lives and the world work and go stop thinking this way look God has given you bread that will give you fullness of life and it's so counter to the way you think you need to follow him further could you go on to the next slide please so this is what Jesus says Jesus the bread of life I am the bread of life whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty but as I told you you you have seen me and you still do not believe all those the father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never drive away so Jesus very directly at that point is saying

I am the bread of life this thing that you're looking for this thing that you're looking to sustain you to give you meaning is me it is not the things that you look for it's not even the different ways you spend your energy even trying to please God all the different things you're doing for him is me and what it means to believe in me and follow me and the bread was never the problem the manna is not the problem it's not like the request for bread is wrong otherwise Jesus would have never fed them in the first place and actually that's the ultimate problem is the bread is often very good the bread is brilliant the bread is often things given to us by God your bread could be whatever it want it could be people in your lives but it was never designed to do that thing that only Jesus himself can actually do and actually the bread being good often can just terminate if I get that one thing God if you did this one thing then everything would fall into place and we probably all have moments in our lives where you've thought that thought of

[23 : 22] God if you just did this one thing if you came up and did this one miracle I'd believe in you or if you did this one thing then everything would fall into place and I would have the perfect life I wouldn't have these issues I wouldn't have these problems and Jesus is saying you've already seen

the miracles you still don't believe and actually I could give you all this bread and I have given you bread but it's never going to meet that deeper need and actually the thing that fuels like the characters in the film the thing that fuels their desire for the bread is actually often the place Jesus wants to meet us because that place is often not a nice place it can be quite a vulnerable place it can be quite a hard place to go to I was up in so I'm from Oban and I was up there before Christmas and we were me and my brothers were in clearing up some of my grandmother my grandmother is quite old and we've had her dementia is really bad in the past six months so we had to move her into a care home and so my grandmother helped raise me and my brothers and sisters and so she was like a parent to us and so we were in this tiny little flat it's a bit of a parody of West of

Scotland men this story ripping it apart ripping it apart to give it back to the council because it's not our house and in that moment you're like man I just want things Jesus if you stepped in right now and just gave me the bread of making this safe little space static in time like I felt you were losing something in that moment I felt losing something in that moment and it was very raw and it was very hard but the pattern of my life around about that time and beyond that was there's a desire under here to do with loss to do with a lack of security to do with hurt the thing I was asking for the thing I wanted was a very material just give me this thing back this space back this space that is full of meaning and love and actually there was a point where all my brothers were I mean this flat is tiny it's like the size of this and we were all in different rooms crying our eyes out but everybody was pretending not to cry because that's what you do in the west of Scotland you all pretend everything's fine even though bright eyed red face and so when I don't get that thing in that moment what I want

I just threw myself into work that's my natural default I'll just throw myself into work for a few weeks because the desire that I would never even acknowledge was not being met because I wasn't bringing it before God because I didn't know how to do it it wasn't in that place that makes sense that idea that there's a desire fueling my behavior and actually I just think give me that oh I can't have that well I'll just reapply all my energy over here and hopefully this will now give me meaning my work will now give me meaning my work will now give me life and actually the very slow gentle process of the spirit and other people to say no the bread of life Jesus wants to meet you here in this place and that brings purpose it brings meaning it doesn't make everything go away it doesn't make everything okay but actually in that place of hurt that place is where the bread of life comes and Jesus says this kind of amazing thing of that when you're given to him you are his you'll be kept so the language of where do I go with this stuff is to the place where God says no no you you are kept safe here you're mine you will always be mine because the people who are given to me I do not lose them I'm for them and I'll always be for them and the problem ultimately of putting your whole zoe-ness if you want on a piece of bread or whatever your bread may be whether that's yeah again work all the classics all the things that we look to give us meaning is it eventually will perish it will break and if it breaks it will break us the classic example is our relationship isn't it this person will complete me then they leave me I'm broken that's very that's why we describe it as a broken heart because part of who we are we look to this thing to give us the thing that only God could give us does that make relationships bad or not good of course not but it was never designed to do that thing that only the bread of life can do whereas Jesus is ultimately the only bread that breaks for you he breaks for me allowing those things that are good to just stay that as good things that we can enjoy and worship

God through so as opposed to looking to a little mini God of a career or money or relationships and saying this if I can get enough energy into this to make this work I will be okay and knowing that I can never do that Jesus says I actually have been broken for you so that you can believe that this is the thing to believe in that the bread the bread of life Jesus has been broken for each and every single one of us and that's the way he ends 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 and that is about heaven and the afterlife but it's more fuller than that it is like look to me now in the present of the bread of life follow me and come to me and you will know the reality of a God who breaks for each one of us daily in he's heading this is Jesus heading to the cross he's he's saying something that is going to become physically true of him but also deeper than just a physical reality of Jesus death could you put the last slide up please

[29 : 09] Saint Augustine says this you have made us for thyself and our heart is restless until it rests in you God I'm not going to speak about this long because it's not my passage but the crowds

