

## **03/04/18 @ BUCYRUS UMC – 3rd SUNDAY OF LENT**

**TITLE:** I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

**TEXT:** JOHN 6:22-35

**GOD’S WORD:** EXODUS 16:1-12

### **I – WONDER BREAD:**

As a UMC pastor I have been to more bake sales than I can count. In those sales I have noticed that nice homemade bread is always a best seller. People can’t wait to get a loaf of it, they get it early and put it away so they’re not left empty-handed. No matter the shape or appearance, it all gets sold within a very short time. This shouldn’t surprise us as we remember how important bread is to us, especially good bread. Most of us have grown up with bread being the symbol of food and a part of a good diet and good health.

I remember growing up and watching the television commercial for “Wonder Bread” which proclaimed that it built strong bodies 8 different ways. We call bread a “staple of life” insinuating that we can’t live without it. I remember going to my Grandparents house for a meal and there would always be bread and butter on the table or the meal wouldn’t be complete. Even in the day of Jesus, bread was a main item at every meal. It even played a prominent role in their feasts like Passover when they baked it without yeast to remind them of what God had done for them.

We crave such things because without bread, without food, we would die. Prisoners are said to get “bread & water” to keep them alive, not to kill them. Jesus taught us to pray “give us this day, our daily bread”, because he knew these human bodies needed fuel, they needed sustenance. He knew they would not operate fully or last without daily food...without daily bread.

### **II – WE NEED PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT:**

I want to call to your attention this morning though, that when Jesus taught us the Lord’s Prayer, and gave us this line about getting daily bread, I don’t think he was speaking only about the stuff we use for toast and sandwiches. I think it goes much deeper than this. Besides our physical nourishment, I think he was also talking about our spiritual nourishment. Human beings have two parts, which make them whole, a physical part and a spiritual part. Both must be fed to be whole and healthy. Both must be fed to have life.

We start to see this concept in the story of the Exodus. Moses has led the Israelites out of Egypt as commanded by God and followed the path God told them to follow. They’ve been out of Egypt for about a month when they become a nation of whiney people. They start whining about the fact that they don’t have the plentiful food they had when they were slaves in Egypt. They accuse Moses and his brother Aaron of leading them into the desert to starve them to death, not to deliver them. I’m guessing if Egypt had erected a set of golden arches instead of the pyramids, the

Israelites would have gone running back for a McCamel burger happy meal instead of pursuing freedom. God hears their whining and tells Moses that he'll take care of it. He'll feed their bellies and give them the nourishment they need to sustain life.

As I read verse 12 of the passage you heard this morning though, I see another kind of nourishment taking shape. God said, <sup>12</sup>*"I have heard the people's complaints. Now tell them, 'In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. **Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.**"* God wasn't worried only with their physical needs, but also their spiritual needs. He wanted them to know him as their Provider and Sustainer. He wanted them to know he would take care of them.

### III – TEXT:

Hundreds of years later God's people were once again in trouble and once again whining under the oppression of the Romans and God sent them bread again...

#### John 6:22 - 35 (NLT)

<sup>22</sup>The next morning, back across the lake, crowds began gathering on the shore, waiting to see Jesus. For they knew that he and his disciples had come over together and that the disciples had gone off in their boat, leaving him behind. <sup>23</sup>Several boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the Lord had blessed the bread and the people had eaten. <sup>24</sup>When the crowd saw that Jesus wasn't there, nor his disciples, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for him. <sup>25</sup>When they arrived and found him, they asked, "Teacher, how did you get here?"

<sup>26</sup>Jesus replied, "The truth is, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you saw the miraculous sign. <sup>27</sup>But you shouldn't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that I, the Son of Man, can give you. For God the Father has sent me for that very purpose."

<sup>28</sup>They replied, "What does God want us to do?"

<sup>29</sup>Jesus told them, "This is what God wants you to do: Believe in the one he has sent."

<sup>30</sup>They replied, "You must show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What will you do for us? <sup>31</sup>After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! As the Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

<sup>32</sup>Jesus said, "I assure you, Moses didn't give them bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

<sup>34</sup>"Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day of our lives."

<sup>35</sup>Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever be hungry again. Those who believe in me will never thirst."

At the beginning of chapter 6 Jesus has just fed the 5,000 people using a couple of fish and 5

loaves of bread. Afterwards he went off to be by himself and the disciples got in their boat and started across the lake. During the night Jesus caught up with them and got to the other side. The people soon followed and were a little puzzled about how Jesus had beat them there, but he didn't tell them about his little walk on the water. They saw a miracle already when he fed them. As a matter of fact he tells them that the only reason they have followed him and want to be with him is because he fed them. He then tells them that instead of placing so much emphasis on their full bellies, they ought to be worried about filling their souls. He tells them that God sent him to give them eternal life and all they have to do is believe in him to receive it.

I am amazed at what happens next. After seeing him feed them with 5 loaves and bread and a couple of fish, they want another miracle. The Son of God, the Messiah they've been waiting for is standing right in front of them and they want a Wonder Bread commercial. They said Moses had a good commercial when he fed our ancestors with bread from heaven. What are you going to show us?

Jesus says I got news for you. Moses wasn't the baker. The bread was from God and that was just plain bread, nothing-fancy just plain bread. You ate it, got full, and were all right until you got hungry again. The bread God has sent this time will fill you up forever. They asked for this new bread and Jesus said, "I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE."

#### **IV – WE NEED PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL BREAD:**

Physical life is challenging unless you're an absolute couch potato. We get up in the morning and run around all day as we go to work, or run errands, or clean the house, or shuttle kids around. Our youth spend their days going to school, playing at recess, running after each other playing tag, or marching in the band, playing basketball, or any of the other sports they're involved in. None of us can survive with food, without bread. Bread fuels us, gives us the energy we need to face the day and carry on with life. Without this nourishment our bodies begin to break down, they don't run as well, our energies are sapped and if we go long enough without it we die.

Spiritual life is challenging too. As we go through the activities we've just mentioned, we are bombarded by other parts of life. There's the boss that got up on the wrong side of the bed and yells at us. The insurance rates just went up again. My best friend is mad at me and won't talk. The boys or girls want to go to the bar after work or out behind the stadium and drink or smoke dope, or carry on in some way. We're bombarded with images and offers of illicit sex. We see that ring we'd like to have and can't afford; maybe when the clerk isn't looking we could pocket it anyhow. Maybe I don't have to report that extra bonus on my taxes. I can only survive these challenges, hold up under these onslaughts if I have nourishment for my

soul. Without that nourishment I die too, but for a much longer time.

We need to spend as much time feeding our souls, our spirits, as we do feeding our bodies. We must spend as much time reading our Bible as we do reading a menu. As much time praying as we do chewing. As much time in church as in the grocery store. As much time fellowshiping with Christians as standing in the kitchen. As much time worshiping God as stuffing our face.

## **V – JESUS IS NOURISHMENT:**

Part of the answer to our Lenten question from Jesus of “WHO DO YOU SAY I AM” is that Jesus is nourishment. Wonder bread may sustain my mortal life, but Jesus sustains my eternal life. When I have Jesus my soul is never hungry. If our society was as overweight in their spiritual life as they are in their physical lives, the world would be a much nicer place to live wouldn't it?

How about you? Is Jesus more important than a hamburger or steak? Do you put as much time into nourishing your soul as you do your body? Have you eaten from the bread of life. If not I invite you to the Lord's Supper table this day to eat your fill and be nourished for life.

As we prepare ourselves for communion at that table let me read you the menu from John Chapter 6, verses 47 – 51:

### **John 6:47 - 51 (NLT)**

<sup>47</sup>“I assure you, anyone who believes in me already has eternal life. <sup>48</sup>Yes, I am the bread of life! <sup>49</sup>Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. <sup>50</sup>However, the bread from heaven gives eternal life to everyone who eats it. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; this bread is my flesh, offered so the world may live.”

AMEN

**GO TO COMMUNION**