

John 6:35-41  
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The Bread of Life  
August 13 2006

One friend suggested calling this sandwich Sunday.

Two weeks ago we heard about Jesus feeding 5000+ people with 5 loaves and 2 fish,  
last week was Jesus saying that God gives the true bread from heaven which gives life for the world.

And this week we have more bread statements and doings by Jesus ...I am the bread of life...I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

This bread we hear about today is not the light, airy white Wonder Bread that is so popular for sandwiches. No, this is bread that won't turn soggy. It will hold a hefty middle – some good meat or vegetable insides are waiting for this sandwich. This is bread that can handle whatever is smeared, smothered, and piled on it. The bread that Jesus is and offers us is himself. And this bread we are offered to eat is bread that gives eternal life.

Remember that the setting for this interaction with Jesus and the Jewish people is Passover – the time when they specifically remember how God has provided for them.

Jesus knows well the history and connection that Jewish people make with bread. God provided bread for the Israelites in the wilderness, in the Promised Land. God provided bread for the prophet Elijah – bread that propelled him on a 40 days and 40 nights journey.

John, in his writing in the 1st century, was trying to help people understand Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world, as God incarnate. We understand now-today, that John was speaking metaphorically, but these assertions would have been ghastly to fellow Jews and Jewish authorities in Jesus' time. They would have been ghastly and blasphemous for John has Jesus using the Hebrew way of referring to God.

And, so, they, the Jewish crowd, are affronted, and knowing his parentage to be Mary and Joseph ask – who does he think he is? From heaven, he thinks he's from heaven; claims to know God; be sent by God?

But Jesus keeps on. He wants people to know who he is. Therefore, they/we will know God. He makes clear I am statements. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

God doesn't just provide this food for us.  
Remember our first reading.

God provided a bit of room service for Elijah in the middle of the desert. Elijah woke and found the cake and water at hand. And God sent someone to wake him – twice – and then sends him on his way through a desert for 40 days and 40 nights – food for strength. And then God drew Elijah to a holy place to encounter God.

God didn't just plop Jesus in our midst.

God draws us to him.

We aren't just fed by God, God takes us to Jesus.

Jesus says that no one can come to him unless drawn by the Father who sent him.

God draws us to Jesus.

How does this happen?

Sometimes being drawn to something is as simple or inviting as the smell of bread baking in the oven as it fills the house. We can't help but find ourselves in the kitchen when it's ready to come out of the oven.

Sometimes being drawn to someone or something happens because there is attraction.

I'm sure there have been times you have felt drawn to someone. Some people are drawn to entertainers, to celebrities. Something draws us to make friends with certain people and maintain those friendships. Mentors are people that often draw us to them for what they can teach us; the wisdom they have learned and share.

Some are drawn to nature; others are drawn to music.

In these cases it's not so much a person or thing is actively working to draw us to them, but there is something attractive about them that we like and we want more of what they have.

Sometimes we are a little more difficult to get to Jesus and it might seem like God has to haul us to Jesus.

Hauled like in a little red wagon, perhaps.

Or hauled like the disk or plow behind a tractor is hauled.

Or hauled like an object that the Starship Enterprise locks into it's tractor beam to drag it into it's hold.

However it happens, we are drawn or hauled to Jesus by God.

Being drawn to Jesus by God by whatever means, can sometimes make us uncomfortable because we will most certainly be taken by God to some places that we don't really think we want to go. Places that are scary or painful. Places of uncertainty and change. Places for new relationships and potential pain and heartache.

Now, there is a catch in all of this. In our relationship with God, we have free will. We're not an inanimate object being pulled along. We are able to break free of God's grip or draw, with tragic results. We don't need to look very far to see these results – broken families, grieving parents, civil unrest, genocide, religious wars.

When we break free, this is when we find ourselves away from God, away from Jesus and we are hungry. Hungry for connectedness. Hungry for peace. Hungry for protection. Hungry for excitement. Hungry for relief. Hungry for someone else to be running the show. Hungry for bread that doesn't get soggy and never goes stale.

Jesus offers us bread for the journey that we might live and love. The offer, the invitation, the promise is that we will get what we need and more—food for the journey, and fullness of life.

Deep inside each of us is a hunger for the life-giving bread that Jesus offers us – God's love. It is the only thing that can fill up the empty spaces in our hearts and souls.

Jesus tells them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Christ comes to us in daily bread, and in bread and wine here today.

Come to the table – taste and see that the Lord is good.

Let your hearts be filled with rest. Let our hearts with praises overflow.

Amen.