
²⁴ Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. ²⁵ When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?” ²⁶ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for Me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.” ³⁵ And Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.” (From John 6:24-35, *NIV*)

There is an old saying that speaks of ‘desires’: “If I find in myself desires nothing in the world can satisfy, I can only conclude: I was not made for ‘here’.” At one level, this speaks of a person’s search for ‘something more’ in life, and the ‘quest’ may people seem to be on for ‘meaning’ or ‘purpose’ in life. There is much food for thought in a saying like this. But one of the words we may pick up on (not always immediately obvious) is ‘desires’. We all have ‘desires’ in our hearts.

Some of the ‘desires’ of our heart may be ‘good’. For example:

Psalm 40:8: “I desire to do Your will, my God; Your law is within my heart.”

Hebrews 13:18: “We desire to live honourably in every way.”

We ‘desire’ good homes, marriages, families, etc.

But ‘desires’ can be ‘elevated’ to become an ‘idol’ (ie: “I demand, then ‘I judge’, and then, ‘I punish”).

The Bible also speaks of ‘evil desires’. For example:

Galatians 5:16: “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit.”

James 4:1: “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

All of us have ‘desires’: to have something in our ‘souls’ to be fed; to have some perceived ‘need’ met in our lives; to see some ‘good thing’ that ‘others’ may ‘have’ that we also feel we ‘need’. “Desires’ in and of themselves are not necessarily ‘bad’, but the question today is: “what ‘bread’ (‘food’) are we really ‘filling’ our soul with...?” Our text for today speaks into the ‘desires of our hearts’.

Jesus, after feeding the 5000 people, crossed to the other side of the lake (from the ‘Gentile’ area, back to the ‘Jewish’ area). We heard this involved a stormy sea, and Jesus walking on water. The crowd had perhaps seen the disciples go, but they wondered how Jesus got to the other side of the Lake. Fascinating here is that they were ‘seeking’ Him, and the verb used for ‘seeking’ here is often used of the leaders ‘seeking’ to kill and arrest Jesus. They also called Jesus ‘Rabbi’, and

not 'Prophet' or 'Master' or 'Lord' (therefore, not seeing something 'divine' as others had done).

The reality is that many in the crowd had 'desires' other than those of God's. They wanted to know how Jesus did what He did; they wanted to make Jesus a king by force. In response, Jesus said, "You are looking for Me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."

The crowd then even dared to ask: "What sign then will You (Jesus) give **us** that we may see it and believe You? What will **You** do?" They said, "Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness." They had seen the miraculous feeding, but still they demanded more. "I want. I demand..." ...an unhealthy elevation of 'desire'.

Jesus questions their motives. And then He says, (*) "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life."

We need to read verse 27 very carefully lest we misunderstand our Lord here (as His audience does). The verb "to work" is found but once in this verse. We almost automatically read the verse this way: "Stop working for the food that disappears, but *work for* the food that remains to eternal life." The words "*work for*" are not in the original text, however. What Jesus is saying is that the "bread" which He offers is a "bread" which He *gives*: it's a gift. That's also why Jesus speaks about those who coming to Him are Him never hungry, and never thirsty. He is speaking to our 'souls', to the 'desires of our hearts', and He is saying He can truly 'fill them'.

What does this means for us?

Jesus says, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life" We know human nature, and human nature is to work very hard to put food onto the table and pay all the bills that make for our survival. We all know about the symbolic statement of "gotta put the food on the table" which means to pay all bills in order to survive. (And there is nothing wrong in this... however...)

There is a problem here today. People work so hard to get ahead financially and materially that we often slip into thinking that food and prosperity are the primary sources of our happiness. As human beings, we work so hard for the things of this world which quickly run down, break down, rust, and rot, crumble and corrode. But genuine happiness is not found in money and material goods.

Yes, desires for 'things' are good (food, home, work, etc). But we see in David an example of what happens when desires get out of hand.

Jesus says, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life"

There is also another 'bread' we sometimes eat. The Psalmist has said (Psalm 80:5): "You (God) have fed them with the bread of tears; You have made them drink tears by the bowlful."

One preacher, in reflecting on this text things not of the 'good things distorted', speaks of a different sort of 'bread' we may 'eat'. He asks: What kind of bread are you eating? He than says some of us are eating too much of the Bread of Anxiety. He says it's not hard to do in these days of economic uncertainties, ill health, life's

difficulties. He says that the Bread of Anxiety is readily available and relatively inexpensive and eating too much of this bread can lead to false perceptions, premature judgments, poor choices and bad decisions.

Others of us are eating too much of the Bread of Weariness. This bread is often served in large quantities to those who care for those who eat too much of the Bread of Anxiety. And he also speaks of 'the Bread of Control'. We are driven by a desire to see 'results'. And he says that some have come to eat large quantities of this bread, thinking it an antidote to the effects of the Bread of Anxiety and the Bread of Weariness, only to find the 'cure' much worse. (read Psalm on OHP)

You may 'get happiness' from 'many things', but real peace is from God.

There is also another 'bread' we may think is a 'good food', but is still an unhealthy form of 'desire'. Even 'spiritually' (that is, in our 'inner spirit', our 'inner being') we may thirst for that which may often be described as 'spiritual junk food': that which gives us a 'quick fix' (and this is not only about 'happy songs' or 'holy hugs' that do not always deal with the real 'grittiness' of 'life').

Our 'spiritual desires' may be such that we're not really looking to (or wanting to look to) Jesus. It is easy to 'fool yourself' into 'believing' that what you are doing is 'God-pleasing' when it's not m(expand, re 'good works). Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty." This has two real applications in our lives.

Last week we heard how Jesus satisfied the hunger of five thousand people with just a few bread rolls and a couple of fish, and then when he realised they were about to grab him and proclaim him king, he slipped off and went bush.

At one level (like the 5000) people in our world need to be 'fed' – literally!! You need to be fed in body. You need to be fed 'in spirit'. There are people who are lonely, who do not know Jesus, who have fallen away from worship, or who are unable to attend worship any more in this place due to age or illness. They need 'bread': actual food, physical contact, emotional contact... They need to 'hear' the 'good news of Jesus' in the 'acts of love' done by Christ's church. This is God's love at work in this world: bringing 'The Living Bread' in a 'real' and 'living way'.

But Jesus also 'went bush'. Jesus knows that we need 'food for the soul. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty." He is the One who says (as we hear in worship), "Your sins are forgiven." He is the One who says (John 6:51): "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Desires... In Christ Jesus God gives us as the bread of life that we might be nourished and built in the bond of peace. In Christ Jesus God gives us the food of eternal life: and no one else, or no other 'thing' of 'this world, can give this 'food'. Jesus is the 'living Bread of heaven'. May He be the true desire of your heart, as You rejoice in His desire to love You and for you to know and live in that love. Amen.