

The Bread of Life

Narrator

Jesus taught, “I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believe on me shall never thirst.”ⁱ Life is full of many challenges that leave us spiritually, emotionally, and physically hungry. Jesus as the bread of life can fill these hungers.

His Bread can sustain us. When Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt, it must have come with physical depravity and abuse. It had to have entailed humiliation and a loss of many freedoms. In addition to this, Joseph certainly shed many tears of sadness for the loss of his family. Although we know that through his dreams Joseph had an idea of what his future held, like Abraham, did he too wondered how God would fulfill those promises under the current conditions? Regardless of if he was unsure of what his future would now hold, God knew exactly of his plan for Joseph. At the very moment that Joseph was thrown in the pit by his brothers, God saw that Joseph would one day pull these same brothers out of the pit of starvation. At the instant he was bound as a slave, the Lord knew that Joseph would be the means of physical salvation for the whole house of Israel. Every time Joseph was abused or mistreated, God was aware that Joseph would heal his family relationships with forgiveness and love.

As the Lord knew it would, the time came that, “*there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very sore, so that the land of Egypt and *all* the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.”ⁱⁱ It was Joseph’s obedience to both God and those he served that earned Joseph the title of second to the Pharaoh himself. By interpreting his dream, Joseph helped implement a countrywide emergency preparedness plan that would save many from the impending famine. “And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt **there was bread.**”ⁱⁱⁱ

Like Joseph, we may not be able to see how our current situation will lead us to our desired or promised end. We can however have comfort in knowing that Christ knows our beginning, middle, and end. He is the Bread of Life and will fill our depleted reserves with faith when we willingly follow Him. Faith is not seeing! Faith means to keep walking with Him as our guide even when we may not know exactly where we are headed.

Song: Faith is Not Seeing (lower and higher version available)

Narrator

The Bread of Life can cleanse us. The story of Jacob and Esau is of two twin boys who grew up with different interests and occupations. Esau loved to hunt but Jacob preferred the breeding and tending of animals. While as parents we know that we love our children equally, it seems their mother, Rebekah was especially proud of the man Jacob had become. The Bible describes Jacob as plain but this word can also be

translated to mean whole, complete, perfect, and simple. In other words Jacob was righteous and heeded the teachings of his parents. Esau on the other hand was more focused on the things of the world. He chose to marry the daughters of Canaan who were considered heathen in their beliefs as opposed to choosing a wife within the covenant people of the Lord. Additionally, Paul described Esau as a fornicator and a profane person^{iv}.

One day Esau came home from a hunting expedition quite hungry. He longed for the food his brother Jacob was preparing. Jacob knew of his brother's unworthiness and offered his meal in exchange for the birthright blessing. "Then Jacob gave Esau **bread and pottage** of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.^v" Esau gave up the Bread of Life because his focus was on earthly bread.

Sometimes we too lose sight of the Bread of Life that God would freely give us because we too get focused on the things of this world. Both sins of commissions and omissions pile upon us and weigh us down and hinder our progress. Whether we make outright mistakes or fail to act due to "busy"ness or improper priorities, we are all in need of His cleansing. Like Jacob, we too can turn our hearts to the Lord and through repentance He will release us from the weight of sin.

Song: Release Me (lower and higher version available – large range)

Narrator

He is our Living Bread. When the Children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt, the Lord sent many plagues to try to convince the Pharaoh to free them. With the last plague being imminent, the Lord commanded the people to take a male lamb in his first year that was without blemish and to kill and eat it **with unleavened bread** and bitter herbs. The Lord warned Moses, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.^{vi}"

The unleavened bread was bread made without yeast. They brought with them out of Egypt these cakes of dough since there was no time for the bread to rise. Because the yeast easily spoiled and became moldy, this unleavened bread was a symbol of purity and incorruption. The lamb represented Christ's sacrifice whose blood would literally save them from the plague of death. Through symbolism, the House of Israel was being taught that Christ would not only save them from spiritual death or the affects of sin but from physical death as well. As death literally passed over them, through the resurrection death passes over us all. Our natural, corrupt bodies will one day become immortal and incorruptible. "And we have hope toward God..., that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.^{vii}" We all have hope that this mortal state is not permanent; pain, deformities, illness, and disease are only temporary. This resurrection that comes to all will not only free us from this imperfect, mortal body but

it assures us that death is not the end and that we will one day be reunited with those who have gone before us.

Song: He Holds Us All

Narrator

He is our Daily Bread. Although the Israelites were free from Egypt, it was difficult for them to be free of the traditions they had adopted there. The Lord used those 40 years in the wilderness as a teaching time for a people who had almost completely lost their identity. They were His chosen people and He would that they would once again come to trust in Him as their God. To accomplish this, not only did the Lord chasten them while in the wilderness, He blessed them as well. “And the children of Israel did eat **manna** forty years.^{viii}” The Lord did not leave them to perish in the wilderness but instead fed them daily. This manna or bread from heaven wasn’t given to them once a month or once a week but every day aside from the Sabbath. This was done to instill in them trust and a habit of daily looking to Him.

The Lord wants to make us his people too. He wants us to be free from the traditions of the world. “When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.^{ix}” The hard things we go through are designed to separate us from the world and bring us unto God. While many of us remember God regardless of if life is easy or hard, there is a deeper yearning for God’s help and companionship when we are suffering. It is during these times that our priorities change and we can see what really matters. Like the Children of Israel we are not left alone in our wilderness, we too can look to God who will sustain us with His daily bread.

Song: One Shining Star

Narrator

The Bread of Life can ease our burdens. In order to bring a people to repentance, Elijah the prophet was given the power to seal the heavens so that it did not rain. While Elijah was also subject to the affects of the drought, the Lord provided for him. “And the ravens brought him **bread** and flesh in the morning, and **bread** and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.^x” Once the brook dried up, I am sure that Elijah must have gone through a period of thirst and hunger but again the Lord granted relief through a widow in Zarephath. Of her he asked, “Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of **bread** in thine hand.^{xi}” It was her very last handful of meal and drops of oil that he asked of her but with faith in his promise that her oil and meal would miraculously replenish until the drought was over, she placed before him what would have been her and her son’s last meal. While the meal and oil did not deplete, this widows trials were not over. Her son that was miraculously saved was now taken by a serious illness. Again, with faith in God, she gave her son to Elijah who took him to his living quarters and revived him.

We too have many burdens in this life. While we may or may not experience hunger or the loss of a child, we each have our own unique challenges. Whether a child that goes astray, betrayal of a loved one, financial problems, loneliness, poor health, or any other struggles, the Lord knows them. Not only does He know them but He has offered to take them and in return He provides for us bread so we do not perish in the droughts of our life. Just as the widow placed her last meal before Elijah and entrusted him with her son, we too can put our challenges at Christ's feet.

Song: A Woman At His Feet (lower and higher version available)

Narrator

His bread is for all. Most people know of the miracle of Christ feeding the 5,000 but many may not realize the circumstances in which He did it. It is Luke who tells us that upon hearing of the death of his beloved friend and cousin, John the Baptist, that Jesus privately took his apostles to a deserted place. We do not know the reason but surely this must have been a huge loss to Jesus and certainly He had reason to mourn. But when the people realized where Jesus went, they "followed Him: and He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.^{xii}" Instead of focusing on Himself and his own loss, Jesus turned his focus to others. Not only did He teach and heal them, but He fed them. "And He took the seven **loaves and the fishes**, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.^{xiii}" Because they were in a deserted place, there was no place to buy food. Instead of sending them hungry at such a late hour where they might faint on their return journey, He made sure they were filled.

The Lord wants us to feed His sheep. While the Lord does not want us to allow those around us to perish physically, He also wants us to feed each other spiritually. When we realize that each of us fall short spiritually, there is really no room for judgment of others. Regardless of the visibility of our sins or the degree of severity, our reliance on Christ's saving grace is equal. "For all sin and come short of the glory of God^{xiv}" and "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.^{xv}" To judge another is as if to say, "I need Christ less." Christ did not judge those that came to Him but fed all equally. We too must lift each other up without judgment and not suffer the physical, emotional, or spiritual needs of our fellowmen and women to go unmet. As we feed others with our love, it will fill them so they do not faint on their journey home.

Song: His Grace is Sufficient for Me

Narrator

He is the bread of our Salvation. Before Christ died, He instituted the sacrament in what is called the Last Supper. "And as they were eating, Jesus **took bread and blessed it, and brake it**, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.^{xvi}" Through the sacrament his apostles were being taught that they would literally

be saved through the shedding of his blood and the death of his body. This sacrifice was not easy. When in His greatest moment of agony, Jesus asked in prayer if this cup could be removed. Although his “soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death^{xvii}” He concluded His plea with a commitment to do His Father’s will. Because of that **willingness** to drink of the bitter cup, we in spite of **our will** never have to drink of it.

Although we cannot comprehend His suffering or the full extent of what He has done for us, we can get a little taste through our own suffering. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s suffering; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.^{xviii}” It is through our trials that we come to appreciate His sacrifice for us more fully. It is our afflictions that help us know the love He has for us and in turn it fills our hearts with love for Him. The more we come to understand His gift to us, the more we desire to give to Him the only gift that is really ours to give: our will.

Song: My Gift to Him

Narrator

Christ is the Bread of Life. His atoning sacrifice not only saves us from death and sin, but helps us live! He can fill us with faith when we cannot see, ease our burdens, and cleanse us of sin. His resurrection ensures that the ailments of this body and the losses in this life are temporary. He is there to give us daily guidance and help us through the challenges of life. In return, He has asked us to “feed His sheep,” that all may be partakers of His grace. When we truly understand His grace we are filled with love for Him and want to follow Him; His commandments are no longer “grievous^{xix}”. We then trust Him enough to give up our will and allow Him to take over the reins of our life. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.^{xx}”

Power Point Song: Blessings by Laura Story

- i John 6:35
- ii Genesis 47:13
- iii Genesis 41:54
- iv Hebrews 12:16
- v Genesis 25:34
- vi Exodus 12:12-13
- vii Acts 24:15
- viii Exodus 16:35
- ix 1 Corinthians 11:32-32
- x 1 Kings 17:6
- xi 1 Kings 17:10-11
- xii Luke 9:11
- xiii Matthew 15:36
- xiv Romans 3:23
- xv James 2:10
- xvi Matthew 26:26-28
- xvii Mark 14:33
- xviii 1 Peter 4:12
- xix 1 John 5:3
- xx Isaiah 41:10