

“WONDER” BREAD

IN THE GOSPEL READING, THERE IS A VERY INTERESTING DIALOGUE THAT TAKES PLACE BETWEEN JESUS AND THE CROWD OF PEOPLE, MANY WHO HAVE JUST BEEN FED THE DAY BEFORE BY THE MIRACLE OF THE FISHES AND LOAVES. THE CROWD BELIEVES THEY SEE SOMETHING IN THIS JESUS GUY. HE MAY BE THE MESSIAH, WHO WILL BECOME KING AND RESTORE THE NATION TO GLORY. HOWEVER, JESUS TURNS THE CONVERSATION AND TALKS ABOUT BREAD. WHY BREAD?

LOOK THROUGH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. BREAD IS A FREQUENT USED ITEM. BREAD IS MENTIONED OVER 250 TIMES IN THE BIBLE. BETHLEHEM, THE BIRTHPLACE OF CHRIST, MEANS “HOUSE OF BREAD”. WE CAN RECALL SOME OF THE MOST MEMORABLE STORIES OF THE BIBLE INVOLVE BREAD. THE MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS, PASSOVER, IN THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON HE USES BREAD TO ILLUSTRATE TAKING RISKS AND GRASPING OPPORTUNITIES BY “CASTING YOUR BREAD UPON THE WATER”, AND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ONE ELEMENT USED IN FEEDING THE MULTITUDES WAS BREAD. OF COURSE, BREAD IS USED IN COMMUNION TO REPRESENT CHRIST’S BODY “GIVEN FOR YOU”.

WHEN JESUS SPOKE ABOUT BREAD WITH THESE PEOPLE, THEY ASSOCIATED RIGHT AWAY WITH IT, BECAUSE BREAD WAS A STAPLE, SOMETHING TO SUSTAIN DAILY LIFE. NOW JESUS SAID TO THEM HE WAS THE “*BREAD OF LIFE*” SENT FROM HEAVEN AND THEY WOULD HUNGER NO MORE. IN LATER VERSES OF THIS CHAPTER WE HEAR HOW THE PEOPLE GRUMBLED AT THESE WORDS OF JESUS AFTER, ALL THEY KNEW HIS MOTHER AND FATHER. THEN TO ADD MORE “FUEL TO THE FIRE”, JESUS MAKES ANOTHER STATEMENT THAT IS EVEN MORE AMAZING CONSIDERING THE TIMES. JESUS AGAIN SAYS HE IS “*THE LIVING BREAD FROM HEAVEN AND WHO EATS OF IT SHALL LIVE FOREVER, TOPPING THAT WITH, IF YOU EAT OF THE FLESH AND DRINK OF THE BLOOD OF THE SON OF MAN ETERNAL LIFE IS YOURS AND HE WILL RAISE YOU UP ON THE LAST DAY!*”

NOW REMEMBER ALL THE LAWS ON RESTRICTIONS OF EATING CERTAIN ANIMALS, AND NEVER THE PARTAKE OF THE BLOOD AS IT WAS THOUGHT TO BE A LIFE FORCE AND SACRED. NOW THEY THINK JESUS IS TELLING THEM TO EAT HUMAN FLESH AND DRINK HUMAN BLOOD!

IMAGINE HEARING THIS FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME WITH THE BACKDROP OF JEWISH LAWS. NO WONDER MANY FOLLOWERS LEFT AFTER HEARING SUCH WORDS. NOT UNLIKE TIMES WHEN JESUS SPOKE AND THE PEOPLE ONLY SAW AND THOUGHT IN TERMS OF WHAT WAS BEFORE THEM, NOT SPIRITUALLY.

NOW COME BACK TO THE PRESENT, HERE AT CENTENNIAL, RIGHT NOW AS WE SIT IN THE PEW AND WORSHIP IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. WHAT DO THOSE WORDS OF JESUS MEAN TO YOU

OR ARE THEY JUST WORDS? THERE IS MEANING AND THE USE OF IT FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US HERE THIS MORNING.

THE PEOPLE IN TODAY'S STORY THOUGHT THEY HAD IT ALL FIGURED OUT AND NEATLY PACKAGED, ABOUT THIS MESSIAH AND WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO FOR THEM. NEWSFLASH! GOD "*DOES HIS OWN THING*" AND FITS IN NO BOX OF OURS.

TODAY, THIS MORNING WE ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN THE PEOPLE JESUS FIRST UTTERED THOSE WORDS TO. HOWEVER, THAT IS NOT WHAT REALLY MATTERS, **IT IS OUR RESPONSE TO JESUS' WORDS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE.** WE CAN TALK AND DEBATE THEOLOGY UNTIL THERE ARE NO WORDS LEFT TO SAY, BUT IT IS OUR ACTIONS THAT SPEAK MORE LOUDLY THAN ANY ORATOR, DEBATER OR SPEAKER THAT HAS EVER LIVED AND ONLY SPOKE VOLUMES OF WORDS WITHOUT ACTION!

WHAT WILL BE OUR RESPONSE TO HIS WORDS - NEGATIVE, INDIFFERENCE, APATHY OR ACTION? WHAT WILL BE THE DETERMINING FACTOR OR MOTIVATION FOR US TO PUT WHAT WE HEAR INTO ACTION? I PROPOSE THAT THE ANSWER IS FOUND IN THIS ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS AND THE CROWD. THEY SIMPLY DID NOT KNOW JESUS, WHO HE WAS AND, THEREFORE, DID NOT KNOW WHO SENT HIM AND THE REAL REASON HE CAME TO DWELL AMONG US.

IF WE TODAY ARE TO KNOW JESUS AS THE "*BREAD OF LIFE*" THEN WE BETTER KNOW HIM PERSONALLY AND WHAT HE IS HERE TO DO IN OUR LIFE OR ANOTHER WAY TO PUT IT, IS TO KNOW **THE INGREDIENTS OF THIS "BREAD OF LIFE"**.

MANY KNOW THAT BAKED BREAD IS A RATHER SIMPLE RECIPE - FOUR MAIN INGREDIENTS – FLOUR, WATER, SALT, AND YEAST. NOW IF YOU HAVE MADE THE BREAD YOU HAVE LEARNED THAT TOO LITTLE OR TOO MUCH OF ANY OF THESE BASIC INGREDIENTS WILL MAKE THE BREAD COME OUT LESS THAN DESIRABLE IN TASTE, TEXTURE OR LOOKS. **THAT IS WHY JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE" I WILL CALL TODAY JESUS THE "WONDER BREAD". UNLIKE REGULAR BREAD WHICH AFTER EATING LEAVES US MANY TIMES HUNGARY FOR MORE OF SOMETHING ELSE, JESUS DOES NOT.**

HOWEVER, HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT WHY JESUS CAN MAKE A STATEMENT THAT WITH HIM WE WILL BE HUNGARY NO MORE? AFTER MAKING SUCH A STATEMENT MANY OF THE CROWD LEFT, WHY? BECAUSE THEY JUST DID NOT KNOW HIM.

DO WE TODAY RESPOND LIKE THOSE IN THE CROWD, BECAUSE WE REALLY DO NOT KNOW WHO JESUS IS AND WHAT THIS "WONDER-FUL" BREAD OF LIFE CAN DO FOR US? **IS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM CONSTANT, CLOSE AND COMPASSIONATE?** WE SING SONGS OF HOW WE LOVE JESUS; CAN WE KNOW THAT IF WE ARE NOT CLOSE TO HIM? ANY OF US THAT

HAVE BEEN IN A RELATIONSHIP KNOW FOR IT TO GROW, MATURE AND FLOURISH THAT THERE HAS TO BE THESE ELEMENTS OR INGREDIENTS IN THAT RELATIONSHIP.

WHAT IS TRULY WONDERFUL ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP WITH **JESUS IS THAT HE COMES LOOKING FOR US**. JESUS AND GOD THE FATHER **DESIRE FOR US TO BE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM**. FOR MANY OF US WE KNOW DEEP INSIDE HOW MUCH FAMILY MEANS TO US, JUST MULTIPLY THAT MANY TIMES OVER AND THAT IS HOW MUCH WE MEAN TO HIM!!!!

WHEN JESUS SAID *"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE AND HE WHO COMES TO ME WILL NOT HUNGER..."* HE GAVE US A CLEAR ILLUSTRATION, ONE WE CAN RELATE TO JUST AS THE CROWD DID THAT DAY. BUT WE CAN UNLIKE MANY IN THE CROWD DID NOT TAKE THE TIME, TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT JESUS MEANT.

WHAT TYPES OF INGREDIENTS IN THIS "BREAD OF LIFE", THIS "WONDER BREAD" CAN FEED US SO WE ARE HUNGARY NO MORE? WE KNOW ONE THING FOR SURE; THAT THERE ARE MANY THINGS IN OUR LIVES THAT WE BELIEVE WILL "FEED" US ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT WE ARE LEFT MORE HUNGARY THAN BEFORE! WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS THAT SATISFY, THAT FILL US UP?

FIRST WE AS DISCIPLES KNOW THAT THE THINGS THIS CULTURE PUTS A HIGH VALUE, ON WILL ONLY FILL OUR HUNGER FOR A SHORT TIME BEFORE IT IS GONE LIKE YOUTH, RICHES, THINGS, ALL THESE ARE NOT LONG-LASTING. SO WHAT IS LONG-LASTING OR FULFILLING, I BELIEVE WE COULD HAVE SOME DIFFERENCES, EVEN DISAGREEMENTS OVER EXACTLY WHAT THEY COULD BE, BUT THERE ARE THINGS THAT NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE WOULD BE ACCEPTED BY ALL WHEN WE HAVE THAT WONDER-FUL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.

WE REALLY DO POSSESS THE WISDOM TO KNOW WHAT IS IMPORTANT AND WHAT IS NOT. NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU TALK TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN THROUGH SAY CANCER OR OTHER TRAGIC EVENTS, ALMOST EVERY PERSON WILL SAY IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER *"IT HELPED ME TO REALLY APPRECIATE AND KNOW WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN LIFE"*.

JESUS CAN FILL THE NEED TO BELONG. WE ARE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD AND WE KNOW THE DESIRE HE HAS TO BE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH US AND THAT DESIRE IS STRONG WITHIN US TOO. WHEN WE ARE DISCIPLES WE BELONG TO THE FAMILY OF GOD, WE ARE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST. **WE ARE ORPHANS NO MORE**. EPHESIANS 1:5 *"God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure."* OR *"You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!"* **Doesn't that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you are a child, you're also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance. THAT IS CERTAINLY BELONGING TO THE FAMILY OF GOD!!!!**

RIGHT ALONG WITH **“BELONGING TO THE FAMILY OF GOD IS BECOMING A FRIEND OF JESUS”**. JUST LIKE ANY RELATIONSHIP WE DEVELOP, THE ONE WITH JESUS HAS SOME SIMILAR TRAITS. ONE TRAIT IN BECOMING FRIENDS IS SOME OF US HAVE NURTURED A FRIENDSHIP THAT HAS GONE ON SO LONG AND SO CLOSE WE CAN DESCRIBE IT BY SAYING THIS PERSON IS A **“DEAR FRIEND” OR A WONDERFUL FRIEND**. JESUS DOES THE SAME FOR US. JOHN 15:15 *“I have called you friends, for everything I have learned from the Father I have made known to you”* TO ME THAT RINGS LOUD AND CLEAR OF BEING **A DEAR FRIEND WHO HAS GIVEN TO US TRUTH AND WISDOM**.

JESUS ALL THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT **ANSWERS OUR QUESTIONS**, FROM THE RICH RULER TO PETER’S QUESTION OF FORGIVENESS TO PILATE AND WHAT IS TRUTH. **WHEN WE TAKE THE TIME TO PRAY WE WILL GET AN ANSWER, MAYBE NOT THE ONE WE WANT OR IN THE TIME WE WANT BUT WE WILL GET AN ANSWER**. IN THE BIBLE, JESUS GAVE ANSWERS THAT WE CAN APPLY TO OUR LIVES THIS VERY DAY. ONE THAT COMES TO MIND IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT **TO LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF**. IF WE DO THAT ON A DAILY BASIS THOSE WORDS ANSWER MANY OF THE QUESTIONS OF HOW TO LIVE OUR LIFE. JESUS DID NOT WASTE WORDS, HE GAVE US ANSWERS PLAIN AND SIMPLE BUT PROFOUND AND DEEP.

WHEN WE RECEIVE ANSWERS FROM PRAYER DUE TO THE RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE WITH JESUS KNOWING HE IS PRESENT WITH US THROUGH ALL AND ANYTHING, OUR **HUMAN FEAR CAN BE RELIEVED OR CALMED**. WE READ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT OF HOW MANY TIMES JESUS CALMED THE FEARS OF HIS DISCIPLES IN STORMS AND BEHIND CLOSED DOORS AFTER THE RESURRECTION. IF WE BELIEVE JESUS IS THE SAME TODAY, YESTERDAY AND IN THE FUTURE THEN HE IS WITH US, HIS MODERN DISCIPLES, TOO.

RIGHT ALONG WITH RELIEVING OUR FEARS **JESUS SATISFIES OUR DOUBTS**. JUST AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, DOUBT IS NOT AN ABSENCE OF FAITH AND WE ALL HAVE DOUBTS AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, IT IS OUR HUMANNESS FOR PROTECTION LIKE WHETHER SOME RICKETY OLD FOOTBRIDGE WILL SUPPORT US IF WE CHOOSE TO WALK ACROSS IT. AND OF COURSE WE REMEMBER THOMAS AND HIS DOUBT WHICH JESUS SATISFIED.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE “INGREDIENTS” OF THE LIVING BREAD OF JESUS CHRIST, WHAT I CALL TODAY OUR “WONDER BREAD” THAT WILL NOT LEAVE US HUNGARY.

IN CLOSING HERE IS A STORY ABOUT BREAD AND THE BREAD OF LIFE – WONDER BREAD.

There is nothing quite like fresh bread as its being baked in the oven as it comes out of the oven you can see it golden brown color, you can smell the freshness, your taste buds start to salivate, your tummy starts to rumble and not until you bite into the bread and eat do you truly experience the benefits inside.

Jesus Christ is the one who can bring real permanent lasting satisfaction into your life.... Today He being brought out to you not out of the oven but from the Word of God. You might be listening and

even moved by what you heard... But that's not enough you need to experience you need to taste and see that the Lord is good.

To be really satisfied you need to come to the one who said in John 6:35." I am the Bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Bread is common to us all, we all eat it and we all need Jesus to experience lasting satisfaction in our lives.

AMEN.