

WE ARE NEEDY BEGGARS
[Response to ‘I AM’ Series—John 6—Bread of Life]

I. CONTEXT

A. 3 EVENTS SET STAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING BREAD OF LIFE

- Feeding of the 5000
- Feeding of the 4000
- Jesus’ warning about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

B. THE FEEDING OF THE 5000

1. **Main event:** feeding of 5000—only miracle found in all four Gospels

Mt 14:13-21—Mk 6:30-44—Lk 9:10-17—Jn 6:1-15

2. **Circumstances**—by the time of **John 6:1**

a. Herod Antipas had just beheaded John the Baptist

- Herod was Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea
- His capital was at Tiberias—half way up the west side of the Sea
- City was named for Herod’s patron Emperor Tiberias

b. Herod was a threat to Jesus and the disciples

- Jesus had sent the 12 into the villages of Galilee
- Their preaching and many healings caused a stir
- Herod wondered if Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected
- Herod “kept trying to see Him (Jesus)”—see Luke 9
- Eventually, it was he who examined Jesus before the crucifixion

c. Jesus [and disciples] “went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee”

3. **Where:**

a. On the **east** side of the Sea of Galilee

1. [Mt says] Jesus had been at Nazareth (west)—then crossed the sea
2. Luke says location was Bethsaida—but this presents a problem
3. There were **two** Bethsidas

a. It was **not** the one in **John 1:44**—home of Philip, Peter, Andrew

- Probably not far from Capernaum
- On the same (*west*) side as Nazareth
- Mt/Mk say the place was ‘secluded’ and ‘desolate’

b. Probably Bethsaida Julias—village on the *east* side of the Sea

b. Specific location—Bethsaida Julias was located in Gaulinitis

1. Outside Herod Antipas’s jurisdiction

2. Ruled by Herod Philip II

- Younger half-brother of Herod Antipas
- Tetrarch of Trachonitus, Gaulinitis, Batanea, Auranitis
- Mentioned in Luke 3:1

4. When

- About the time of Passover—see Jn 6:4
- So, probably second year of public ministry
 - First Passover had been in John 2—cleansing of Temple

5. Setting the Scene of John 6

- Jesus was healing the sick
 - People followed Him there because He had been healing (Jn 6)
 - They flocked from nearby villages—arrived *before* Him (Mk 6)
 - Just before He fed the crowd—He healed many people (Mt 14)
- Jesus was teaching the crowd “many things” (Mk 6)
- The crowd—was *much* bigger than 5000
 - Mt 14 says 5000 men *besides* women and children
- The situation seemed impossible
 - The location was desolate—no provisions available
 - Even if there had been—it would have cost over 200 denari
 - Almost seven months’ pay (200 days pay)
- The miracle—recounted in **John 6:1-14**
 - Jesus fed them with 5 loaves and 2 fishes
 - And there were 12 baskets left over
- Jesus’ following **discourse**—I AM the Bread of Life—**vv 26-58**

C. THE FEEDING OF THE 4000

1. Events leading to this

- Jesus crossed back over the west side of the Sea (to Gennesaret)
- En route—He walked on the water—and Peter tried to do so
- At Gennesaret—Jesus disputed with the Pharisees and scribes
 - Issue: why do your disciples not wash hands before eating
 - Jesus: it is not what goes in that defiles, but what comes out
- To Tyre/Sidon—exorcised Syrophenician woman’s daughter

- e. Along the Sea of Galilee, he healed the crowds
 - Mark set this in the Decapolis—just before the 4000

2. The miracle

- *Over* 4000 fed—Mt says this did not include women/children
- With 7 loaves and ‘a few fish’
- 7 baskets were left over

3. The reason

- This occurred in the region of the Greek cities
- So Jesus repeated the miracle/message for non-Jews

D. FOLLOW-UP LESSON—BEWARE THE LEAVEN

1. Setting the **scene**

- a. Jesus crossed back to the west side—to Magadan (His home region)
- b. Pharisees and Sadducees came from Jerusalem to ‘test’ Him
 - They demanded a sign from Jesus
 - He said the only one they would get would be the ‘sign of Jonah’
- c. Returned to the other side of the Sea—probably to Bethsaida Julias
 - Where Mark says Jesus also healed a blind man

2. The **lesson**—Mt 16:5-12

- a. Jesus warned, “Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
- b. Disciples thought Jesus was talking about *bread*
 - They had forgotten the bread (after feeding of 4000)
 - So, they apparently intended to buy some
 - They thought He was warning to watch the quality of that bread
- c. Jesus corrected the disciples
 - They did not have to worry about the bread at all
 - Had they already forgotten the lesson of the two feedings?
 - [Implied—He could provide bread anytime!]
 - They must watch the *teachings* of the Pharisees and Sadducees
- d. Then they to the western side—to Caesarea Philippi
 - Where Peter made his great confession of Jesus as the Christ

READ THE FOCAL PASSAGES—JN 6:1-14, 26-58

THREE THINGS TO CONSIDER FROM THIS PASSAGE

1. Never forget who provides all our needs.
2. Cast your vision beyond physical things
3. Remember what it means to be God's bread

II. NEVER FORGET WHO PROVIDES ALL OUR NEEDS

A. DIVINE SOURCE

1. He **knows** our needs

a. Even before we ask

Mt 6:7-8—[Don't use vain repetitions in your prayers like the pagans do—in order to get the attention of their gods] *For your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*

b. Even when we don't know *what* to ask

Rom 8:26-7—The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words—when we do not even know how to pray

- Jesus knew the *real* need of the crowd in John 6

2. He is **able** to provide all our needs—and far more

Eph 3:20-21—*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generation forever and ever.*

3. His is a **supernatural** provision—transcending all natural problems

Jas 1:17—Every good and every perfect gift comes from **above** from the Father of Lights

- The *very* best gift is the bread that has come from heaven

B. DIVINE PROOF

1. He **showed** Israel His ability to do this repeatedly

- He provided manna daily and twice as much for the Sabbath
- He brought water out of a rock

2. He **confirmed** this in Jesus' parallel miracles

- He turned the water to wine—Jn 2
- He multiplied the bread and fishes—Jn 6

C. DIVINE PROMISE

1. God **cares** for us—[Mt 10:29-31](#)

- Two sparrows are sold for a cent
- Yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from the Father
- But the very hairs of your head are numbered
- Fear not—you are more valuable than many sparrows

2. All we must do is—**ask** the Father—with expectation He will provide

Mt 6:11—*Give us this day our daily bread*

D. OUR HUMAN PROBLEMS

1. **Doubt**—lacking faith

a. The disciples did not really trust Jesus—in Mt 16:8 [leaven passage]

1. They thought it was up to them to get the bread
2. Jesus chided them: “O ye of little faith” We don’t really **trust**

b. We do the same when:

- We *say* we trust God—but we hedge our bets!
- We really try to do it all ourselves
- We don’t **expect** the *supernatural* to vanquish the natural!

2. **Forgetting** what God has already done

a. The feeding of the 4000

1. The disciples had already forgotten Jesus’ miracle with the 5000
2. They were concerned about not having enough money!

b. We do the same when:

- We don’t recall what God has already done in our own lives
- We don’t give God praise when He does something for us
- We don’t rehearse with conviction God’s great acts in history

3. **Lack of gratefulness**—we ‘test’ God

a. **Jesus’ followers** were ungrateful—see [6: 41,52](#)

1. They ‘grumbled’

- This man from Nazareth—they knew as a carpenter—said He came from heaven (**verse 41**)

2. The ‘argued’

- The metaphysical problem—how could He give them His flesh to eat? (verse 52)

b. **Israel** was ungrateful with Moses and God

1. They ‘grumbled’

- When they felt sorry for themselves about leaving the meat pots of Egypt—and there was no bread—but God gave them manna (**Ex 16:2**)

2. They ‘quarreled’

- With Moses about water—but God made water come out of the rock at Rephidim (**Ex 17:2**)

c. **We do the same**

- When we presume upon God—expecting Him to give us all we want—entitlement attitude—not what we need
- We feel sorry for ourselves when we don’t have what others have [e.g. what those in Egypt had]—martyr attitude
- We develop a critical and negative spirit—and attitude of perfectionism and legalism that finds fault with everything [like the Pharisees]
- We become narcissistic—it is all about us—not helping others and serving God—[like Pharisees and Sadducees]

II. CAST YOUR VISION BEYOND PHYSICAL THINGS

A. LIFE IS MORE THAN BREAD

1. Jesus’ first line of defense in His temptation

Mt 4:4—It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’

2. The principles of God’s provision

a. Jesus quoted this from **Dt 8:3**

b. There God told Israel He used the wilderness for **four purposes**

1. To keep Israel humble and dependent upon Him
2. To test their resolve to be obedient to His commandments
3. To discipline them as a son—to walk in His ways and fear Him
4. To cause them not to forget Him and His provision for them

c. **SUMMARY:** our limitations and dependence on daily bread reminds us of our ultimate reliance upon the Living Bread

3. These principles apply in two ways

- a. Here and now
- b. A new time and space

B. HERE AND NOW—THIS TOUCHES ALL ASPECTS OF OUR BEING

1. God provides for every part of our lives

- a. We are to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength
- b. He—too—empowers each of these aspects of our lives
 - Heart—emotional
 - Mind—rational/intellectual
 - Soul—spiritual
 - Strength—physical

2. Seen in John's account of Jesus (chapters 2-6)

a. At the **Feeding of the 5000** (and 4000)—Jesus cared for:

- Their physical needs—healing and food
- Their spiritual needs—preached the gospel
- Their rational needs—taught them

b. With **Nicodemus**—Jesus cared for:

- His rational/intellectual needs—teacher of the Jews
- His spiritual need—“you must be born again”

c. With the **Samaritan woman**—Jesus cared for:

- Her physical needs—water
- Her emotional needs—marriage, family, reputation
- Her spiritual need—proclaimed His messiahship

C. A NEW TIME AND SPACE

1. God's provision **transcends this time and place**—it is **eternal**

- Work for eternal food, not food that perishes—Jn 6:27

2. The **source is heavenly** not earthly

v32—but it is My Father who gives you the true bread of heaven

v33—For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven

v38—For I have come down from heaven, not to do My will

v50—This is the bread that comes down out of heaven

v51—I am the Living Bread that came down out of heaven

v58—This is the bread which came down out of heaven

3. John 6 focuses not on this time but **eternal life**—emphasized five times

v27—the food that endures to eternal life

v40—everyone who beholds and believes will have eternal life

v47—truly, truly . . . he who believes has eternal life

v50—This is the bread . . . that one may eat of it and not die

v51—if anyone eats this bread, he will live forever

D. THE TRAGEDY OF SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS

1. At first we don't see the spiritual reality—but **focus on physical needs**

a. **Samaritan woman** focused on daily need—give me *this* water—Jn 4

b. **Nicodemus** focused on natural birth—not spiritual birth—Jn 3

c. **Remnant of 5000** focused on daily bread

1. Jesus identifies problem—verse 26—you came because I fed you

2. He promised them **bread from heaven**—v 33

3. But they are thinking only of **manna**—verse 31

4. After each of His explanations, **they remained obstinate (4 times)**

▪ **v34**—give us this (daily) bread that will last forever

▪ **v41**—the grumbled about His human lineage

▪ **v52**—they argued about 'eating His flesh'

▪ **v60**—they complained that His words were too hard

5. Finally many rejected Him and left—who were spiritually blind

a. They were looking for a **messiah like Moses**

- Who would provide their physical needs
- And order their daily regimens

b. They were **not expecting**

- One who claimed deity—Bread of Heaven
- One who required that they eat His body

c. He urged them to keep **spiritual priorities**—Mt 6:25-32

1. Not to worry about food, drink, clothes, and lifespan

2. But to seek first the Kingdom of God

d. These spiritual things were not even on their radar

III. REMEMBER WHAT IT MEANS TO BE GOD'S BREAD

A. ISRAEL WAS GOD'S BREAD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. The **Shewbread** displayed in the Temple
 - 12 loaves covered with frankincense
 - Displayed on golden overlaid table of acacia wood
 - Placed in the Holy Place of the Temple
 - Opposite the Menorah in front of the Altar
2. This 'bread of presence' was always before the Lord—Ex 25:30
3. It showed that Israel was God's people—His special possession

B. JESUS BECAME THE BREAD AND SACRIFICE FOR THE PEOPLE

1. He came from heaven as the **living bread**
2. He gave His life for the world

Jn 6:33 and **50-51**—*For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and give life to the world . . . This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.*

3. These words were very meaningful in light of the coming Passover
4. So whoever sees and believes in Him will have everlasting life—**v40**
5. Becomes a reality by 'eating His flesh' and 'drinking His blood'—**v56**

C. WE BECOME GOD'S BREAD TODAY

1. Israel '**ate**' manna—[verb *esthio* = to consume, to eat]—but died
2. We are called to '**digest**' Christ—[verb '*trogo*' = to devour, digest]
 - a. Verb used three times in **verses 54-58**
 - b. Focuses on the process of becoming totally one with something
 - c. We do this spiritually—not physically [not sacramentally]
 - d. So we become one with Christ—and a new creature in Christ
 - e. We take on the character of His food we digest—Christlikeness
3. We become God's bread—the church—as His new show bread

4. We become *one* bread in Christ—a body unified—a *whole* loaf
5. This identity is *symbolized* in our communion at the Lord's Supper

I Cor 10:16-17—*Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we bread a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread*

6. So, we must guard ourselves—to remain *one* bread—unified
7. And we must we must beware the leaven that can corrupt us—Mt 16

Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah
by Welch Methodist William Williams

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield;
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

1959 Prices

House: \$30,000

Average income: \$5,016

Ford car: \$2,132-\$3,979

Milk: \$1.01

Gas: 25 cents per gallon

Bread: 20 cents a loaf

Postage stamp: 4 cents

T-Bone steak: \$1.09 lb.

Tomato soup: 10 cents a can

Eggs per doz: 79 cents/dozen

Hamburger 30 cents per pound

Potatoes 3.5 cents per pound

Sugar 8 cents per pound

Butter 67 cents per pound

Margarine 19 cents per pound

Now:

Eggs are still a bargain—less than double

Milk is still pretty good—just double

Butter is still okay—just over double

Gas is 14x

Hamburger is 8x

T-bones are 8X

Bread is 10x

Postage is 11x