

Jesus Is Our Only Bread

There are those times in our lives when we are humbled by what we cannot do. I remember when I was in grade school. I wanted to be an aerospace engineer. And there was this book I used to check out from the library again and again. It was a physics textbook dealing with flight in space. I read the words in that book again and again. I looked at the charts. But, as much as I tried, I couldn't figure it out. All that time was wasted. All of that effort was in vain. And all those dreams faded away like a cloud in the sky.

In the words we look at this morning, Jesus has finished feeding the stomachs of thousands of people. Now, he is working to feed their souls. And he tells them: "*John 6:44* "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..."

There was no way they could get to heaven. There was no way they could go to the Father. Even more impossible than it is for your pastor to be an aerospace engineer, it was even more impossible for those thousands of people gathered together on the grass around Jesus to go the Father.

Jesus is working so diligently to teach them this very important theological point. They cannot go to the Father. So, the Father draws them. The word Jesus uses here is a very vivid word. If you have a piece of rock or stone and you want to move it, you can talk to it. You can encourage it. You can be mean to it. You can be nice to it. But, in the end, you have to pick it up because the rock utterly unable to do anything for itself.

Just as much as Jesus was working to share this truth to those thousands gathered around him on that grass at that time, he still works through his word to share that truth with us. We cannot go up to heaven. We cannot go to the Father. And we ask that huge question: Why? Why is it that we cannot go up to heaven? Why is it that God, the Father has to come to us and not just do the heavy lifting, but *all* the lifting?

He has to come to us because we are sinners. When I was young, at least I *wanted* to be an aerospace engineer. When it comes to getting into heaven, because we are sinners, we do not even *want* to go to heaven. We like this earth. We like our hobbies and games. We like our food and drinks. Why would we lift our eyes above when there are so many parts of life in front of our face on this earth to absorb ourselves in?

We are sinners. And this sin shows itself in our lives. Our sinful natures keep telling us that we do not need God. And even worse than that. We go to the next worse step: We tell ourselves that God needs us. We tell ourselves that God needs us to seek him, earn him, follow him, pay for his church, fill his pews. Our Father *wants* us. He wants us to know him and rejoice in the forgiveness he gives to us so fully and freely. But he doesn't need us. No, we need him. We need him because we are unable to get rid of our selfish sin. We are so unable to go to heaven where there is no sin and perfect peace.

We are unable to go to the Father. So, he comes to us. And when he comes to us he goes *all* the way. He does not say in his word "I will go 9/10 of the way, but you have do the other tenth yourself". And he does not come to us and say "I will go 9/10 of the way. But, before I draw you to me, you have to choose me." No, Jesus says: "The Father will go *all* the way. He will choose you from eternity. He will declare you 'not guilty' of your sin. He will send Jesus to die for your sins. Jesus will rise from the dead to destroy the power your sins have over you. And then, he will take that victory over sin and place it in your heart with the power of his word. (Rom 8)"

We lie to ourselves and tell ourselves that we don't need God. We want so very much to do it by ourselves. We want so very much to get to heaven without our Father and his Son. And where does that leave us? It leaves us alone. It leaves us traveling through this lonely lifeless world feeding our stomachs with the bread of the world instead of Jesus, the bread of life. It leaves us finding our food in the newest action movie or oldest classic book. It leaves us finding food for our souls from our nearest friends and closest family. And, in the end, after all that lonely walking apart from our Father, all we have is loneliness. Because we wanted to be alone. And what we so desperately wanted, we got. If we follow where our sinful hearts lead us, that is where we end up: starving, alone in eternal darkness.

But, Jesus is the bread of life. The food we can never find for our souls here in the world he freely gives to us. In verse 44 we read: "*(John 6:44)* "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last

day.”

God, the Father shows us our sins. Then he introduces us to Jesus, the only one who can give us food for our souls. And then Jesus promises to raise us on the last day. Now, for any of us who have sat in pews for any amount of time, these are not new words, are they? But, they will take on new meaning when someone you love dies. These words will mean so very much to you when what remains of your grandma, cousin, uncle, spouse or child is a pile of dust in a jar. They will mean so very much to you when that loved one is slowly decaying in the ground. Jesus says: “I will raise you up from the dead.” Just as we were unable to come to God and convert ourselves, so also, when we die, there is nothing we can do to raise the dirt that used to be our bodies from the ground. But, our Savior, Jesus promises that he will raise us up from the dead forever.

But, in these words we find even more comfort. For, Jesus tells us in the closing verses of this section: “*John 6:48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*”

Jesus will not just raise us on the last day. He will also give us food for our souls every day until the Last Day comes. We see this so clearly in our first lesson this morning. Elijah was a broken, burnt-out prophet burdened by work and buried by duty. He ran from his work. He ran as far and as fast as he could. And, at the end of all that running, where was he? Where he was was alone. Where he was was starving in the middle of the desert.

The LORD was gracious to him and fed his stomach. But, far more important than that, he fed his soul with his word. Our great God still does the same today. Jesus is our only bread from heaven. He is the only one who can lift those who are down. He is the only one who can feed our starving souls with precious meals of love and faithfulness. He is the only bread who can seek us, find us and then change our cold, rebellious hearts so that we follow him. He is the only bread from heaven.

So then, my brothers and sisters in Christ, let us throw away those sinful thoughts that tell us that we do not need Jesus. Let us throw away those sinful desires which tell us that we need to be alone, away from God’s word and the food we so desperately need. Let us throw all those sins away from us and onto Jesus. For Jesus is our only bread from heaven. He is the only one who can fill our empty souls with forgiveness and love and eternal life. Amen.