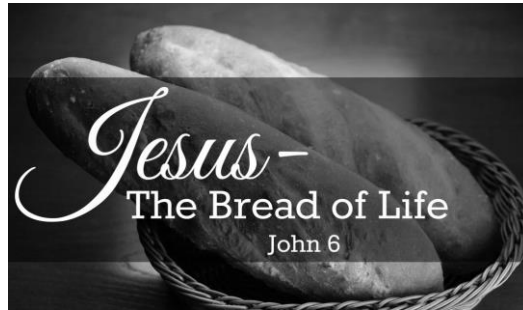


BREAD OF LIFE DIET



Scripture:

Ephesians 4:1-16

¹I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." ⁹(When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) ¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

John 6:24-35

²⁴So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" ²⁶Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." ²⁸Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" ²⁹Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God,

that you believe in him whom he has sent.”³⁰ So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?”³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”³² Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.³³ For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



BREAD OF LIFE DIET

Who here is on a diet? Does anyone want to admit it? Well, literally we are all on a diet. Your diet is whatever you choose to eat. Some are on a vegetarian diet, or a fast food diet, or others are on a chocolate diet. I found there is such a thing as a bread diet!

Usually if you want to lose weight they say to cut back on the bread consumption. But not with this diet! The key is to eat the bread alone, with no butter on it. The author of the Bread Diet encourages appreciating the bread for what it is without adding anything.

Bread is a recurring symbol of life in the Bible because it was the staple food in ancient Mesopotamia. Bread symbolizes our need for sustenance and is often featured in the scriptures. The Israelites in Egypt were told to quickly bake bread without yeast at the Passover as God saved them from bondage. In Exodus 16, God provided the manna in the wilderness. In 1st Samuel 21, David was on the run from Saul, so he was allowed to eat the special bread of presence from the tabernacle (in the temple) to sustain him. And even Ezekiel baked bread while in exile, demonstrating God knows what people need and provides.

OUR DAILY BREAD

The phrase in the Lord’s prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread,” is a reference to the miracle of the manna in the Old Testament which taught the Jews (when they were in exile in the desert) they could trust God would supply their physical needs, one day at a time.

The Israelites were not allowed to hoard the manna; it spoiled at the end of



Manna

a lot like
coriander
seed
(Num. 11:7)

the day. It taught them to trust.

That is what this “bread of life” is all about, too. Today Jesus supplies our spiritual nourishment daily. He tells us today, as he told his disciples, to take, eat, this is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me.

THE JESUS DIET

Reverend Amy Haynie, who wrote a blog for the Episcopal Cafe website, described “the Jesus Diet.” She said, “It’s all about healthy choices, making a lifetime commitment that guarantees results because the diet comes with a personal trainer. Jesus. He is with us every step of the way with the Jesus diet, feeding, leading, and getting us in shape for eternity.”

Then Reverend Amy adds that the Jesus diet isn’t about losing. It is about gaining; gaining serenity, gaining purpose and direction in this life, and about gaining the joys of eternity in the next life.

That sounds like a very appealing diet, now doesn’t it? And it is the only diet you can find where you will never be hungry or thirsty while on it! No other diet can truly live up to that claim!

JOHN 6

In this week’s passage from John 6 it details the day after Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes. Now Jesus is trying, once again to rest, but the crowd doesn’t want the party to end. They follow and ask him for another sign to prove they should believe in him. They want daily bread like the manna Moses and the Israelites received in the desert.

Jesus helps the crowd see that he is the Bread of Life that is more fulfilling than the manna of the past. He offers them spiritual food that will fill that hunger they carry deep inside.

Earlier, in John’s gospel, Jesus was referred to as “the Word made flesh” which means he is the revelation of God in human form. He is the Bread of Life who gives our life purpose and strength. Jesus is the manifestation of God’s love, a walking

vessel of redeeming grace, mercy, and peace.

FEELING AT PEACE

The bread of life Christ provides to us is a feast that unites us with others. When we feel at peace in our souls, we are less anxious, less desperate, less competitive and more community oriented. We are fed and fueled by the Holy Spirit and sustained by God’s amazing grace. Our faith in Christ nourishes and strengthens us in body, mind, and soul. When we are fully committed and fully accepting of the love of Christ we live each day with a sense of purpose to fulfill God’s work in the world with the blessings we have been given.

Jesus didn’t come to perform miracles to awe the crowds. Jesus came to demonstrate God’s love by healing, teaching, peace-making and affirming that all of creation is equally precious in God’s sight.

TRYING TO FILL THE EMPTINESS

We are to follow Christ’s way of sharing the bread of life and hope with a world that is starving for love and trying to fill that emptiness with all the wrong things, like that song by Johnny Lee: *Lookin’ for love in all the wrong places...*

So many in our world are wandering in the wilderness, looking for love in wealth, drugs, food, fame, and fortune. There is a new documentary at the Summerfield Theatre titled *Generation Wealth*. It is about the American obsession with materialism and wealth that has gotten out of control. The film focuses on the deep

lack of fulfillment that drives people to accumulate more and more stuff.

A video trailer was shown to the congregation.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQfuq_zz1Jk

Money doesn't satisfy the soul. Materialism makes the empty soul exhausted and still hungry for more.

In an article titled: *The Spiritual Similarities between Steve Jobs and George Harrison*, author Dr. Doug LaBier said, "Destructive over-emphasis on materialism is eroding our society and personal lives. The conventional view of a successful life is that it's defined largely by financial and self-interested criteria — getting, extracting, consuming and possessing for yourself. On the micro-level, research shows that a highly materialistic orientation erodes relationships. Moreover, a materialistic, self-absorbed, self-interest orientation to "success" is unrealistic and out of kilter with our twenty-first century world, where everything and everyone is highly interwoven and interconnected."

TRUST GOD

Trust God. The bread of life is eternally fulfilling. Jesus says, "Come all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." The bread of heaven gives rest to our souls. The greatest gift we can receive is God's loving peacefulness that is communicated to us through faith and in this Lord's Supper. God's grace is given to all whether we deserve it or not. The bread of life is free. The love — unconditional. Amen

Benediction:

I encourage you to try the Jesus Diet.

Knowing you are loved unconditionally should free your spirit to soar. You can be and do what you can to help bring God's kingdom of peace, love and justice to the earth.

May it be so.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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