

**Date: August 5, 2018**

**Scripture: John 6:24-35**

**Title: Empty Within**

In my research, I ran into an item that you might find interesting. Did you know, there's a Museum of Burnt Food located in Arlington Massachusetts? This museum is home to around fifty thousand specimens of charred food including over two thousand items in the Hall of Burnt Toast alone. This is true. The museum attracts around twenty five thousand visitors a year. There's no accounting for taste, no pun intended.

And here's something that won't surprise you: According to one source, the size of the average meal served in a restaurant is 170% larger in comparison to a meal prepared at home! Want to lose weight? Don't eat out so much.

Food is very important in our lives! Some of you will agree with the person who said, "Coffee makes it possible to get out of bed in the morning. Chocolate makes it worth it." We all have our weaknesses.

Last week, we heard about Jesus feeding 5,000 hungry men and an unknown number of women and children with just 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish. What a thrilling day that must have been. Naturally, the crowd that was fed, was amazed. In fact, the writer John says, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Then he adds, "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself."

Jesus had no intent of becoming an earthly king. It's obvious now, that the reason Jesus told some of the people he healed, not to share it with anybody else, is that, if stories of his healing powers got around, he knew people would try to lure him from his real mission. He didn't come to build an earthly kingdom, at least not at that time. Healing people, as much as he had compassion on the people who came to him, was not his real mission. His real purpose was to spread the good news of the Kingdom of God. His real purpose was to train his disciples to carry on the work of the Kingdom. His real purpose, was to show people in his own life, the very nature of God. So under the cover of darkness, after feeding the 5000, he crossed to the other side of the lake, to Capernaum. But many of the people got in boats and came after him. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

Jesus avoided answering them. He said, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. He said, don't work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him, God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Do you know what it is to hunger for the food that never spoils? That is, the bread of life? Not the bread you buy at Sav-Mart or Safeway, or Walmart or Whole Foods. Do you hunger for the bread, only Christ can supply?

You know what physical hunger is. Actually, the hunger pangs that most of us have known, have only been a minor inconvenience. But we do know a little about physical hunger. Some of us barely finish lunch before we start thinking about the evening meal. I read recently that the normal, typical person spends 35,000 hours of his or her lifetime eating! 35,000 hours! Which, if you do the math, works out to 8 years of eating non-stop for 12 hours a day! Obviously, we get hungry a lot! But do we get hungry for that which will truly satisfy us? We know about physical hunger. But do we know about spiritual hunger?

**Many of us have a deep emptiness within, that nothing physical will ever fill.** It's a longing to be connected to our Creator. There's something missing from our lives. Something is missing, and in its place, we have substituted all sorts of things, material things, power, sex, accomplishment, but none of these ever really satisfies. We always want more.

Some of you will remember when a young man named Boris Becker was at the very top of the tennis world. Did you know Becker was at the same time on the brink of suicide? In his own words, he said, "I had won Wimbledon twice before, once as the youngest player. I was rich. I had all the material possessions I needed . . . It's the old song of movie stars and pop stars who commit suicide. They have everything, and yet they're so unhappy. I had no inner peace. I was a puppet on a string."

Now, Becker isn't the only celebrity to feel that sense of emptiness. There have been many more. You don't have to be a celebrity to feel that emptiness. As someone has said, "The echoes of a hollow life pervade our culture. One doesn't have to read many contemporary biographies, to find the same frustration and disappointment.

It's so sad to see a promising young life snuffed out like that. **But, many people today look deep within their hearts and find nothing but, a deep emptiness there.**

They ask questions like: Why are we here? Where are we headed? What does it all mean? For many people, there are no satisfying answers to those questions.

One of Professor and Theologian Paul Tillich's teaching was reminding us that three fears have gripped humankind. Before the Christian era, it was the fear of death. During the middle ages, it was the fear of guilt. Today, Tillich said, it's the fear of meaninglessness. The mad search for escape, for nirvana, for death itself, is the result of that fear. There's no joy, there's only fun. There's no peace, there's only aspirin. There's no hope, there's only alcohol or some other form of narcotic.

**It was to fill this emptiness, this meaninglessness, that Christ came into the world.** Jesus said, "I am the bread of life . . ." You can search all over this earth, to find

that one thing, that's missing in your life, but until you feed on Jesus, you will never be satisfied.

Pastor Rodney Buchanan tells of standing in line at Walmart one day and a woman and her young son were ahead of him. The boy was unhappy because he saw something he wanted and his mother wasn't allowing him to get it. His disappointment began to crescendo, and she suddenly blurted out: "What can I tell you, Billie? Life sucks, and then you die."

Buchanan write, "Imagine having that, as a truth on which you were operating your life! The kind of truths we tell ourselves, and our children, are molding us and the future generation. The truth is, that God created a good world, and life is good, when we live it for God and base our lives on his Word. When we live away from God, life sucks and then you die.' But when you live your life for God, life makes sense, because it's based on the truth, and because your life is based on the truth, it works."

Dr. Buchanan is right. Building a life on God does work. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life . . ." What does that mean to you? Bestselling author Max Lucado gives us a new interpretation of the meaning of that phrase. He writes, "The grain-to-bread process is a demanding one. The seed must be planted before it can grow. When the grain is ripe, it must be cut down and ground into flour. Before it can become bread, it must pass through the oven. Bread is the end result of planting, harvesting and heating.

Lucado writes, "Jesus endured an identical process, He was born into this world. He was cut down, bruised and beaten on the threshing floor of Calvary. He passed through the fire of God's wrath, for our sake. He 'suffered because of others' sins, the Righteous One, for the unrighteous ones. He went through it all, was put to death and then made alive, to bring us to God.'

Bread of Life? Jesus lived up to the title, but an unopened loaf of bread, doesn't do anybody, any good! Lucado asks, "Have you received the bread? Have you received God's forgiveness?"

Those are questions you and I need to answer today. The world is still hungry for true bread. Christ is that bread.

"Sir," the people said in response to Christ's teaching, ". . . give us this bread."

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." And that's true. The greatest need that each of us has, is to feed on Christ Trusting, Believing, and having an Active Faith in God making disciples of Jesus Christ in the transformation of the world. Amen.