

Which Food?

HN/SS 21/11/04 am

Reading: Matthew 6, John 6:1-27

Study: John 6:22-27

Psalms 107:1-9, 103:1-5, 34:8-13, 102nd:23-28

Today we are going to be talking about what food is best for you. Did I see eyes light up? I was at a conference once and people were nodding off as usual as papers were being presented. Then somewhat got up and started talking about the amazing nutritional value of some particular vegetable. In preliminary studies we have seen the potential of this vegetable to slow the growth of some cancers. Well, everyone sat up; the room was suddenly alive as all listened attentively for some miracle cure.

Jesus speaks about *food which endures to everlasting life*. You want something that will help you to live longer, a vitamin, a mineral, an antioxidant or whatever. “Don’t worry about that,” says Jesus. Don’t go after *food that perishes* but food that gives you life everlasting. Isn’t that great news! Oh that all those food magazines that fill the shelves at the newsagent carried the headline food that gives you everlasting life. Well that is the message of the gospel. That is the message Jesus declared to these people who came to him wanting more food to fill their bellies.

Food that perishes

A crowd of over 5000 people gathered before Jesus on the grassy slopes near Bethsaida. At the end of the day they were hungry so he took the five loaves and two fish, gave thanks and distributed the food to the people. They all ate till they could eat no more.

The next morning some were still there and they started feeling hungry again. Where was Jesus they asked? They had seen his disciples leave in the only boat that was there but Jesus was not with them. Eventually some boats came from Tiberias – some enterprising fellow probably heard about these people stranded across the lake. So the people came to Capernaum hoping to find Jesus.

Sure enough Jesus was there. Maybe it was in the synagogue at Capernaum that they found him (6:59). Wondering how he got back they asked him *Rabbi, when did you come here?* His disciples knew, as we do, that he came walking across on the water. Jesus did not answer their question directly for he knew what was in their hearts. As we have seen before he answered the question that was in their hearts – not necessarily the same as the one that was on their lips.

Why had they come in search of Jesus? Not because you saw the signs but because they ate of the loaves and were filled. These were probably poor people. They were under Roman occupation and being taxed heavily. We do not appreciate how some poor people long to have their hunger satisfied because they never get enough to eat. They are always able to eat more. These people were filled when Jesus fed them and so they were after more of this good thing.

How basic, how mundane, how carnal you might say. There was Jesus, the Son of God, in their midst and all they could think about was food. They were seeking Jesus for the wrong reason. They wanted food that would satisfy them for just a few hours when Jesus could give them a whole new life, eternal life in Him.

Is it not the same today when people flock to healing services. They go to one healing service after another and if they are not healed they go away disappointed. They want their bodies healed but what about their souls. People will travel half way around the world seeking healing for their body at some shrine or by some miracle worker but they will not go to the church around the corner to hear of the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Are there other wrong reasons why people seek Jesus? Well to the extent that coming to church is seeking Jesus we know of those who come to church to make a good impression. Maybe not so much nowadays but still some come to find a good Christian girl to marry, or to maintain a reputation in the community. Is this not why some politicians like to be seen in church.

And maybe there are those whose egos are aided by coming to church. They like to be in positions of leadership, to rule over others and a church is a good a place as any to do that. Whatever the reason people come, Jesus knows and Jesus will not commit himself to those who come to him for the wrong reason.

Man's greatest need is to know what is his greatest need! Is that true? What do you think is your greatest need? Better health? A promotion? More money? To pass your exams? These people came to Jesus at Capernaum looking for more miracles – food, healing. Jesus knew the reason they had come. He exhorted them to think more deeply, to think about spiritual realities and not just carnal things.

Food that endures

Out in the desert a man's body was found. He had died of dehydration after running out water. He had been walking along a dry creek bed- and just a few cm below the sandy surface was fresh water. How sad, how tragic, for this man to die when life-giving water was right there. Then the news reported that back along the track the man had walked past a sign which said 'water in the sand'.

The people who came to Jesus had enjoyed the bread and the fish that he gave them by the power of God. But they failed to see the sign, to see what this miracle pointed to. They had come to him yet again but still did not see Jesus for who he is – not just a wonder worker able to impress with miracles, not just an earthly king, but one who has come down from heaven, sent by God the Father.

The Son of Man he called himself. More than a prophet he was the Son. He was sent and he was sealed by God the Father. Jesus bore the seal, the authentic mark of divine ownership. God spoke from heaven at his baptism- this is my Son in whom I am well pleased. The miracles also bore the mark of divine power. Indeed they were signs of this very thing - of Jesus being God the Son.

Jesus had the power not only to heal the sick, to walk on the water and miraculously multiply loaves of bread. Jesus had power to forgive sin. He has power to give life – eternal life. The people who came to Jesus were perishing and more barley loaves and fish would not save them from perishing.

Think about it said Jesus. Oh that men and women would think about their souls as much as they do their bellies – or even half as much. Oh that they would read the Bible as they do the health and lifestyle magazines. Oh that they would go to church as eagerly as they go to the restaurant for a feed, or as readily they go to the doctor for their cold. Oh that they would prepare for their resurrection as carefully as they do for their retirement.

Food that endures to everlasting life. Here is much better value than any superannuation. You have a few hundred thousand dollars set aside for a comfortable retirement do you? A man died at 61 the other day. Of what use was his superannuation to him? The food that Jesus gives does not perish and even death cannot take it from you. It remains into eternity.

Free gift

Jesus said he Son of Man will *give you* this food. Jesus will give eternal life to those ask. What an amazing gift. Eternal life is what you have when you are in Christ. When you believe that he is God the Son, sent by God to save you from your sin.

Why strive or work for bread that sustains only your body when Jesus says he will give you bread to sustain your body and your soul. He was not of course advocating you give up work but that you give up striving for worldly things as if this is all that life is about. He will give you bread such that you will never hunger. Remember how he gave the Samaritan woman water such that she would never thirst again.

Have you come to Jesus seeking the eternal blessing that he gives, or have you come for some lesser reason, a reason that is limited to life in this world. Jesus knows you need your daily bread – he will surely provide this for you. Look at the birds of the air he said. *They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they* (Matthew 6:26).

You are of more value. You are made in the image of God. He gives you bread that endures unto eternal life, even the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Have you tasted that bread? It is bread that satisfies the hungry soul, bread that will sustain your life when physical bread no longer can.

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon