

Jesus - The Bread of Life

1. Intro

- Some of you know ... when I was I high school I went to boarding school in Bathurst
 - Years 8 & 9 at school coincided with my most significant growth spurt
 - Grew from 5'10" – 6'4" in a year
- If you're going to grow that much in a year you need to consume **a lot** of food
 - And if you don't a pantry or fridge on hand to be raiding a will ... it means you need to be making the most of every meal
 - I quickly learnt that if you don't eat big at breakfast, lunch and dinner if you're going to survive
 - So meal times at school were serious eating affairs
 - Hot meals at each meal time, seconds, cereal, toast, dessert, seconds, copious amounts of milk ... and heaps and heaps of bread
- When it got to lunch time ... after I'd had my main meal > rissoles, spaghetti bol or something ... then it was time to hit the bread
 - Bread was the great filler for me at lunch time in particular
 - On any given day, after my hot meal I would eat up to 16 slices of bread > golden syrup, jam, PB, honey > what ever
- Two problems ...
 - First was ... Bread bin > guarded by a teacher > not take more than four pieces at a time > meant multiple trips to the bread bin, back to the table > whack some jam or golden syrup on > gulp it down ... back to the bread bin for more
 - Second problem was ... even though you learn to inhale food at boarding school ... I was eating so much ... my friends could never be bothered sticking around waiting for me to polish off all my food > so inevitably be left on my 'pat-malone' > just me and my bread having a lovely old time while the dining hall was eerily empty

- I tell you if Jesus came along to Bathurst and I'd heard Jesus say ... "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry" ... I tell you ... I would have signed up on the spot!
- If I had I think in the end I would have been disappointed
- Because as we look closer at today's passage we're going to see that
 - Jesus wasn't talking about physical bread ... and
 - He wasn't talking about physical hunger
- But what we will also see as we look this morning is ...
 - What Jesus is offering is so much more important than physical bread
 - And the hunger he is satisfying is so much deeper than just our physical hunger
- So this morning ... we're looking at Jesus – the bread of life
 - Why do you need it?
 - What is it?
 - How do you get it?

2. Why do you need it? [SLIDE]

- Last week > Jesus fed 5000 men plus women and children
 - He did it to show he is the true and better Moses who has come with divine power
 - He will not allow the masses to impose their own agenda on him
 - He has his own agenda which is to rescue his people into his eternal kingdom

- Jesus and his disciples left the crowd and went to the other side of the lake
- We see the next day in v22-25 crowd chase Jesus around the lake trying to have another audience with Jesus
- But Jesus knows their agenda is still self centred
 - The reason is they have followed him is to get more food
 - To see another miracle

- *v26-27 I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life,*
- When Jesus says they didn't see the miraculous sign ...
 - they did see the **miracle**
 - But they didn't see the **sign** > that is they didn't see what the feeding was pointing too
- So Jesus rebukes them
 - He says ... don't work for food that spoils ... but work for food that endures for eternal life
- Now when the Bible talks about eternal life ... it means much more than just life forever
 - Later in John 10 ... Jesus says *"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full"*
 - You see eternal life is a full life
 - It's life as it's meant to be
 - It's a deep, rich, joyful, meaningful life
 - It's life with purpose and fulfilment
 - It's the ultimate life
 - It's a life that's worth living
- There are many ways in which we will typically seek after this type of life
 - Who doesn't want a full life ... a life with meaning, purpose, joy and fulfilment?
 - So inevitably we will hunt around for
 - the thing we think will give us this life
 - the thing we think makes life worth living

- **Illustration - Lazy Rainy Days**

- Last weekend had the storms and the rain
- If you were a fly on the wall in our house during rainy days like last Saturday ... you would be guaranteed to see a number of things
 - Certain / nearly all members of the household would remain in their pyjamas for the entire day
 - They would plonk themselves on the couch ... or in bed and read their book ... while they listened to the rain fall outside
 - You'd be guaranteed to hear at least someone say ...
 - "Ahh ... this is the life"
- For them ... the ideal life is a lazy rainy day curled up with a book in their pyjamas!

- Now you may laugh ... and it is light hearted
 - But don't you think God is laughing at what you think living is
 - When you work out the thing that you think makes life worth living ...
 - Jesus says ... if it's not the bread I give ... then it will spoil ... it won't last ... it will fail to satisfy

- There can be any number of things we can chase after that we think are going to satisfy our hunger for life
- For example
 - Money > if I can just accumulate \$X ... then I will be satisfied
 - Success > if I can just achieve this goal in life ... then I will be satisfied
 - Holidays > if we can just do this holiday ... then I will be happy
 - Technology > when I get the latest upgrade or gadget ... then I'll feel good
 - Renovations > when we've finally finished the renovations ... then I can sit back and enjoy life
 - Approval > friends / parents / school mates / boss ... if they like me ... then I will feel good about myself

- If you live for your house renovation ... what happens when you lose it?
 - Friend of mine had a beautiful house on north shore > renovated a couple of years ago
 - Then in Dec last year ... lost his job > not his fault > being ethical > refusing to engaging in dodgy business operations
 - Unfortunately he hasn't been able to get job > unable to pay the mortgage
 - Two weeks ago they sold the house and now they're looking to rent somewhere
- Jesus says don't work for food that spoils

- What if the thing you live for in life is your kids
 - You say to yourself
 - "my kids are what life is all about and they're the ones I live for > they're the ones that make life meaningful"
 - What happens if
 - they don't end up making good life choices
 - or if they rebel
 - or they don't turn out as you hoped?

- What if the thing you live for is your career
 - If I achieve this level in the organisation
 - Become General Manager of ...
 - Chief something
 - I can just achieve this project or level of profitability
 - ... then I will be satisfied
- I've lost count of the number of people who've lost their jobs ... through no fault of their own ... and left devastated
 - Company merges with another company ... less ppl required
 - Company restructures ... and the job no longer exists
 - Company looking to cut costs and downsizes its work force

- Another friend ... 26 years with a major bank
 - Big team, big budget ... restructured and he's job disappeared
- You see ... if we hunger and thirst for anything other than the bread that Jesus gives ...
 - it will spoil ...
 - it won't last ...
 - it will leave you hungry for more
- Which is why Jesus says ...
- "*Work not for food that spoils but for food that endures for eternal life*"
 - It's a quality of life > life to the full with meaning, purpose, contentment and joy ... and only Jesus can give it

3. What is it? [SLIDE]

- So Jesus is telling them to work for food that endures for eternal life
- So the obvious question is ... what is this bread that endures to eternal life?
- Jesus gives the first clue in v33
 - *For the bread of God is **he** who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*
 - The bread of life that they need is a person
 - It's not an eternal ideal or a mystical force ... it's a person
- When the people ask Jesus to give them this bread ... [they still don't get it] ... he tells them plainly in v35
 - ***I am the bread of heaven. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.***
 - Jesus is the bread that gives life to the world
 - Life to the full > ultimate life comes in and through a person > Jesus Christ

Personal

- Here's where a lot of people get Christianity wrong
 - A lot of people think Christianity is all about
 - Rules and ritual and restricting your freedom
 - That you have to
 - be good
 - follow the 10 commandments
 - try not to sin too much
 - make sure you go to church and give money to get in God's good books
 - Hopefully that's enough that God will be happy with you

- But Jesus is showing us here is that at its heart ... Christianity is a personal religion
 - You can know a person, talk to, befriend, walk with, lean on, trust in a person
 - Unless your faith is personal you haven't understood Christianity

- You see Christians have a God who is personal
 - Jesus cried and screamed
 - He got tired and hungry
 - He felt pain and joy
 - He loved and lamented

- Christians don't have a quality of life that is an abstraction
 - It's not intellectual or mystical ... its personal

- Relationship with God like marriage
 - A real marriage is one where you are communicating / sharing / making yourself vulnerable / open to change and critique / willing to serve sacrificially
 - You can have a functional marriage but not be loving and affectionate
 - When a marriage becomes functional it's like a business relationship

- Most ppl before they're Christian would say they either had no relationship with God or a business relationship with God
 - If this the basis of your faith ...
 - If you're relationship with God is purely functional ... then you're not a real Christian
 - A real Christian has a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ
 - Doesn't matter if you were raised in a Christian home
 - There's a place where your relationship stops being a business one and it becomes personal

- When it comes to you and God ...
 - Are you communicating with him / sharing with him / making yourself vulnerable to him / open to change and critique / willing to serve sacrificially

- What's God been teaching you lately? Have you been listening?
 - Do you sense his love?
 - Do you show your love for him?
 - Do you get together with him just to get together with him?
 - In hard times does he give you peace?
 - Do you feel him supporting you?
 - Does he communicate with you?
 - Are you willing to rearrange your life to show he is the priority in your life?

- Bread of heaven is a person ... do you have a personal relationship with Jesus or not?

Satisfying

- Second thing that this verse teaches about the bread of heaven is ... it's totally satisfying

- v35 *He who comes to me will **never go hungry**, and he who believes in me will **never be thirsty**.*
- The words hungry and thirsty can mean both
 - be needing food and water; a physical craving you have when you haven't eaten all day [in my case when you haven't eaten in the last 2hrs]; also
 - To hunger or thirst is to desire something ... to long for something
- Jesus is using this play on words to mean the latter
 - When you feed on me ... the bread of heaven ... you will never be left empty and desiring more
- Jesus recognises that there's a deep longing in the soul for us to find peace, and meaning and fulfilment and contentment in life
 - What he's highlighting is ... if you try and find that peace, meaning, fulfilment and contentment in other things ... it will leave you feeling hungry and thirsty
 - You will never be satisfied
- I think we all know this intuitively ... I think we experience in our lives
- **Illustration - Philanthropy**
- Talking to someone recently who was telling me about conference in Melbourne run for businessmen
 - All on the topic of philanthropy > giving money away to good causes
- He was describing this phenomena which is becoming increasingly common amongst successful business men and women
 - Establish your career > 20s
 - Grow your career > 30's
 - Succeed in your career > 40's
- What tends to happen ... people get towards the end of their career ... been very successful ...
 - Grown the business

- Huge salary
- Success with projects, new products, new market share etc
- And they say ... "what next?" and they start looking for new ways to find satisfaction and meaning in their career ... because they're still hungry and thirsty
- What happens is these successful business owners and execs are turning to philanthropy late in their career to find that meaning, fulfilment and contentment > Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, giving away huge amts of money
- Same with our sporting stars ... become successful and start foundations, charities and trusts
 - Steve Waugh Foundation
 - Tim Cahill Cancer Fund
- We're hungry and thirsty for more

- For others ... it might be the inability of their job to give them meaning, fulfilment and contentment which mean they keep moving jobs ...
 - Start a new job / employer / different role ... after a while still hungry and thirsty
 - And so they move on ... it doesn't satisfy ... still hungry and thirsty ... they move on

- For others this will play out in relationships
 - Relationships will never give us the meaning, fulfilment and contentment our souls crave after
 - So after a while ... ppl are still hungry and thirsty
 - And so they move on ... find another relationship
- And after a while they realise that isn't satisfying either ...

- ASIDE – by the way, this is why you need to have Christ at the centre of your marriage and your relationship. Because if you seek to satisfy the hunger and thirst of your soul through your spouse / partner, your

marriage / relationship will always be strained because you are placing on your partner / spouse a burden they cannot possibly fulfil. But if Christ is at the centre and he is the one you go to to satisfy your hunger and thirst then it frees your spouse / partner to love you without that unfulfilled burden and tension hovering over your relationship

- There's a deep craving of the soul that things and people of this world can never satisfy
- But Jesus says ... *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will **never** go hungry > believe in me and you will **never** be thirsty"*

- How is it that Jesus satisfies the deep hunger and thirst of your soul?
- Often what is underlying our chasing after other things is the deep desire to feel valued and loved
- You chasing after
 - Career success > desire to feel valued > for others appreciate you > that's approval
 - Chasing relationships > Desire to feel loved
 - Chasing after the perfect body image / weight > desire for approval

- When you come to Jesus ... when you're in a personal relationship with the Son of God ...
 - You come to realise you are more loved than you can ever imagine
 - You're approval before God could never be more secure

- When Jesus had the final supper with the disciples the night before he was crucified ... he took bread and when he had broken it, he said "This is my body which is given for you"
 - You see, just as Christ broke the bread ... so too would his body be broken
 - And why did he do it?

- “this is my body which is given FOR YOU”
- He **showed** you how much he loved you by allowing his body to be broken for you
- And in going to the cross, Jesus took on all the judgment from God you deserve for your sin
 - In Christ ... you’re forgiven, you have nothing more to pay
 - The slate has been wiped clean
- Which means ... if you’re in Christ ... your approval before God is utterly secure
 - There is nothing that can undermine it ... Jesus has paid every last cent of the debt you owed
 - So your approval before God is never in doubt
- So you see friends ... when you receive the bread of heaven ... Jesus Christ ... you will never hunger and you will never thirst again
 - All those deep desires and longings of the soul you are seeking to satisfy in other things and other people ... are fully satisfied in Christ
- Because in him
 - You are more loved than you can ever imagine
 - Your approval before God could never be more secure

4. How do you get it? [SLIDE]

- We need the bread of heaven if we want to truly have life that endures and does not spoil
- It is found in Jesus – he is the bread of life
- How do you get it? How do you receive Jesus and therefore, what he offers?
- You need to do three things – v35 & 40
 - Come to Jesus
 - Look to Jesus

- Believe in Jesus
- It requires action
 - It's no good saying "That's nice ... Jesus is the bread of life. I see what he did there ... that was clever > bread, feeding, hunger ... he would've made a good poet"
- No Jesus wants you and I to respond

- Firstly, v35
 - *I am the bread of life ... whoever **comes to me** will never go hungry*
- We're to come to Jesus
 - You cannot ignore Jesus
 - You can't be like the younger son in the parable of the prodigal son who takes his inheritance, rejects the Father and goes off to live life his own way
 - In effect he was saying to his Father "I want your stuff, but I don't want you"
 - You can never have the bread of life while you continue to turn your back on God
 - If you do ... you will continue to be hungry and thirsty

- But Jesus says ... come to me
- If you come to Jesus and say ...
 - "Lord I'm sad make me happy" ... that's no good
- If come to him and say
 - "I'm hurting ... make me feel better" ... that's no good either
- But if you come
 - Like the younger son who came back to the Father in humility and repentance...
- And you say

- "Lord ... I realise that I'm a rebel ... and I should have been broken but you were broken in my place ... and I trust in you ... and I give myself to you"
- Then ... and only then can he become the bread of heaven for you
 - Only then can he give you the life the full you hunger and are thirsting for
 - Only then will be able to share in the bread of life that means you will never be hungry and never be thirsty
- Second thing Jesus says is we are to believe in him
 - v35 - *I am the bread of life ... whoever **believes** in me will never be thirsty*
 - v40 - *everyone who looks to the Son and **believes** in him shall have eternal life*
- The word believe in the NT is the same as faith or trust
 - Jesus says ... whoever trusts in me will never be thirsty ... he will be satisfied ... and you will have eternal life > life to the full
- The word trust means to lean on ... to put your weight on
 - When we first bought our house > old rickety stairs
 - Didn't trust them > didn't look like they could bear the weight of someone walking down them
 - Not sure > so I sent Liana down ... they were fine
 - But not long before my instinct proved right ... one day put my weight the step and fell right through it
- There is no doubt however that you can lean on Jesus Christ
 - There is no doubt you can put your weight on him > trust him > believe in him
- You know why?
 - His body was broken so that you could have life
 - He left heaven in order to come and give you the bread of heaven

- Thirdly v40 Jesus says whoever **looks** to the son shall have eternal life
 - You can look to the things of this world to satisfy the deepest desires of your soul
 - At they may give you joy and pleasure for a moment
 - But in the end, they will leave you hungry and thirsty
- Only when you look to Jesus as the source for your deepest hunger and thirsting will you will you find true fulfilment, meaning, joy & contentment

5. Conclusion

- Don't get to the last day and be one of those people who stands on judgment day and says I stuffed my own life because I chased after something that I thought would give me life ... but actually faded to nothing
- Can you see what it means to make Jesus your bread?
- Something has got to be your bread
 - We're all chasing something we think will give us life
- Is it Jesus?
 - If it isn't it will spoil
 - And it won't endure ... and neither will you
- So ... come, believe and look to Jesus – the bread that endures to eternal life ... and you will never be thirsty ... and you will be hungry

PRAY