

TEXT: John 6:51-58

THEME: WONDER BREAD

1. Bread from Out of This World
2. Bread for This World

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Meteor Crater in Arizona is an astounding 4,000 feet across (that's over 13 football fields laid end to end) and 550 feet deep (which is almost 2 football fields deep). A meteorite fell from outer space, generating an estimated 5.5 magnitude earthquake, and the crater remains to this day. For centuries, objects from outer space have piqued the human imagination, spawning many legends (including Area 51), works of science fiction, movies, and TV shows.

God sometimes sent objects from heaven to prove how much he loved and cared for his people. One of the most remarkable was manna, heavenly "what-cha-ma-call-it," specifically designed to feed God's people who were convinced they would starve to death in the desert. This is what manna may have looked like; we don't know for sure because no one thought to take a picture.

Jesus used this ancient miracle to illustrate what he is. In our Gospel reading, Jesus calls himself living bread from heaven: "**I am the living bread that came down from heaven.**" He says that whoever eats this bread will live forever. This is true WONDER BREAD. This Wonder Bread was far better than the manna that could only sustain the body. Jesus explains that this Wonder Bread is his flesh, offered for the world's sins. Whoever believes in Jesus is treasuring Jesus' sacrifice for sin as his or her own. In this way, Jesus nourishes souls and gives forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

It is important that we remember this heavenly nourishment when we become overly concerned about our daily bread—the bread we need for our lives here and now. God gave manna to the Israelites in the desert because he knew they needed it. So too with us. All that we have comes from heaven, gifts from our heavenly Father. But as with manna, this bread will not keep us alive forever. The time will come when we can no longer take nourishment; we will die, just as the Israelites died.

It's not that way with the bread from heaven. Keep on eating this bread by believing in Jesus and the fact that he gave his body into death for you. In him you have new life and new power, which nothing on earth can give you. You have the power to say no to sin, to say, "No! I'm not going to listen to that gossip about my neighbor." To say, "No! I'm not going to look at that internet pornography." To say, "No! I'm not going to get drunk to try to escape my loneliness or my problems." You have this new life and new power, only through Jesus. This life had to come from outside this world, for this world can give us nothing that lasts forever. And this is no science fiction plot or pious tale. This is the absolute truth! Jesus is the Bread of Life.

And that picture is one that everyone in the world can understand. Every race of people, every culture, every country has some form of bread. Bread is a universal staple and necessity, just like Jesus.

Bread...putting bread on the table. How did they do it? Two or three generations ago, on a meager income and with few resources, couples often clothed and fed families of 6, 8, or 10 children. That feat is not unheard of today; but years ago, it was rather common. Yet few went hungry. Add a little water to the soup, and put out lots of bread!

How does God do it? Every day he feeds nearly 7 billion people. True, there are disruptions in food distribution. Famine, government ineptitude, and greed sometimes interfere, but there is always enough food for the planet.

God does a similar thing with spiritual food. Jesus offered his flesh as payment for the sins of the entire world. His was an infinite sacrifice. No person was left out. **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16). “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).** Peter adds, **“Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Peter 3:18).**

Since no one has been left out of Christ’s redemptive work, God wants all people to believe in Jesus and, thus, to eat the Bread of Life. Souls are lost only because they refuse to partake of the banquet of salvation the Lord has prepared. They reject the Bread of Life through unbelief.

Many people think that it doesn’t matter what bread you eat because they think any bread will give you life. You’ve maybe seen the bumper sticker that spells out “COEXIST” with symbols from different religions. How stupid! For one thing, you cannot coexist with suicide bombers, Islamic extremists, trying to annihilate you. Maybe you’ve seen a more honest bumper sticker along the same lines. It spells out “CONTRADICT” with symbols from different religions. That is much more honest. All of those religions do contradict each other...but only one of them is different from all the rest...only one of them is right. Jesus said, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).** There is only one way to heaven for all people and it is available to all people.

Our forgiveness is guaranteed because God offered a sacrifice for *all*. That’s how we know we are included. When the devil tries to convince us that our lives are beyond salvage, when doubts convince us that our failings are beyond the Lord’s forgiveness and our sins are too serious for his healing, let’s eat voraciously of the Savior. Eat from his Word every day. Feast at his holy meal each week. He is our living bread. Since his is the flesh of the God-man, the heavenly nourishment never runs out. His grace is always greater than our guilt! What a meal! Amen.

Prayer of the Church

Dear Savior, you gave your body for the life of the world. Thank you for including each of us in the payment you made on the cross. Dear Father, through our baptisms, you put to death our sinful natures and joined each of us to Christ, the Bread of Life. Through faith worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we believe the fact that you reconciled the world to yourself in Christ and made us your own. Especially in times of doubt, forgive us and lead us to feast deeply on your love.

We thank you for the nourishment you provide for our bodies. But we thank you above all for the food you provide for our souls that preserves us to eternal life. Give us this food as we live by faith in you each day. Amen.