



For the Week of April 15, 2012

Good Questions, Straight Answers:
hard words

Life Notes for Missional Communities

Introduction

This week's passage begins with a familiar miracle - the feeding of the 5,000 - and ends with some very hard teaching from Jesus. The Savior of the world compelled his crowd to be doers of the word and not merely hearers of the word. He compelled them to take him as the bread of life and stop thinking only of their next meal.

Pastor Mark told us how important it is to truly be a Jesus-follower, not a consumer Christian who wants Jesus only as a personal provider of all desires. Take Jesus seriously. Follow him as Lord.

The Word: John 6:1-40

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he spoke to Philip.

Jesus: *"Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"*

(He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.)

Philip: *"Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"*

Andrew: *"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"*

Jesus: *"Have the people sit down."*

There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

When they had all had enough to eat, Jesus spoke to his disciples.

Jesus: *"Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."*

So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to speak.

People: *"Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."*

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But he spoke to them.

Jesus: *"It is I; don't be afraid."*

Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him this question.

Crowd: *"Rabbi, when did you get here?"*

Jesus: *"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. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."*

Crowd: *"What must we do to do the works God requires?"*

Jesus: *"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*

Crowd: *"What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*

Jesus: *"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*

Crowd: *"Sir, from now on give us this bread."*

Jesus: *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the*

will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

hard truths: face-to-face with hunger

We begin and end this week's lesson with bread. Jesus fed 5,000 plus and he said "I am the bread of life" to those who'd experienced the miracle but still couldn't grasp who he really was...or is.

Imagine you are the young boy with the fish and loaves. It's lunchtime. What would you have felt about your lunch being used that day? What might you have seen, heard, experienced?

We have the same situation in our world today - people are hungry for something they can't even name. And Jesus uses us to help feed those who are searching. *What are the loaves and fish in your life that you can offer Jesus...what can Jesus use of yours to help meet the needs of those who are hungry?*

You're here in 2012, in the midst of God working in a hungry world. What's the hunger that he's addressing in the world around you - a hunger that you're part of?

hard truths: face-to-face with fear

We are all afraid - afraid of change, afraid of ridicule, afraid of being wrong, afraid of being "found out." We are afraid of things we cannot control, things we do not fully understand, things we imagine to be true whether they're true or not.

The next scene in John 6 finds the disciples headed to a new place - leaving behind the scene of that day's miracle. They've just been part of a crowd of thousands and now they are alone. Jesus withdrew to the mountain while they're rowing in the night as the winds start to blow and the water gets rough.

You're a disciple. What are you and your friends talking about in the boat? What are you thinking about? What's your impression of the day's events?

Someone appears to be walking on water (obviously not a common occurrence). And he's coming toward the boat.

Why do you think they felt afraid after everything they'd witnessed so far? Think about the role fear plays in your life. What causes you to feel afraid? What happens when you feel afraid?

What is God calling you to that you long for but still fear? (You might examine Peter's response as recorded in Matthew 14:22-33 for some insight.)

When Jesus entered the boat, they found themselves miraculously on the other side - 4 or 5 miles further than they were a second ago.

What have you experienced that is like the rough sea? Did God send any help your way? How did you respond? When all was said and done, did you experience God's grace in any way and, if so, how? Was your boat any closer to the next shore?

hard truths: face-to-face with the bread of life

Pastor Mark spoke candidly with us about the difference between wanting what Jesus can do for us and wanting to truly follow him and be his disciple. It's tough to evaluate our own lives, but the disciples regularly found themselves face-to-face with difficult truths and difficult faith-decisions.

What drew you initially to Jesus?

What draws you now to a life of knowing Jesus?

What causes you to pull away from fully knowing him?

What faith-decision is before you right now? (maybe a personal decision you need to make about a relationship, your career, a family conflict, a friendship, a life change of some sort)?

What faith-changes (specific steps) do you need to make/take in order to solidify that faith-decision?

After feeding 5,000 plus with literal bread and fish, Jesus told all who were listening, *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”* What they’d eaten the day before had already given way to fresh hunger, so what was Jesus talking about?

What food was Jesus providing the people that day? How is the bread of life specifically feeding you?

A few quotes to encourage.

“When someone begins a relationship with God, they experience this equilibrium of full devotion. They come to understand some truths about God, about themselves and about the invitation of forgiveness being offered. And whether of accepting that invitation happened in an instant or during a lengthy season, eventually their level of surrender came in line with their understanding of those truths. They were fully devoted; their heart was as devoted as it knew to be.

*“But from that day forward, for the rest of our lives, there is an ongoing growth process during which we become aware of new truths - truths about God, truths about ourselves or truths around us. And there will be an ongoing wrestling between our will and these new truths as we surrender. When we do surrender in light of whatever particular area of truth, our hearts are once again fully devoted and we have become something new. We surrender and change gradually, perhaps, but we are nonetheless new.” (Mindy Caliguire, *Discovering Soul Care*, p. 47)*

for missional communities not doing life notes

Spend a few moments at the beginning or ending of your time responding to the following:

What food is Jesus offering you today?

What is easy about receiving the bread of life?

What is difficult about receiving the bread of life?

Next Week

To prepare for more discussion in John in the coming weeks, read John 6:41-71 and pages 99-107 in Metzger’s *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town*.

Don’t forget to email questions you might have on these passages in John to Pastor Mark at markc@mission68.org.

see next page for facilitator suggestions

Facilitator Suggestions

The main question for this week is *“Are we really following Jesus or are we behaving like consumer Christians?”*

So start there with your groups.

In what ways do we act like consumer Christians?

In what ways is it easy for you to be a disciple right now?

In what ways is it difficult for you to be a disciple right now?

(Try to guide the conversation from general comments to personal, more specific comments.)

The disciples sincerely wanted to follow Jesus, but even in the wake of one miracle and facing yet another, they were fearful and had a hard time believing.

What drew you initially to Jesus?

What draws you now to a life of knowing Jesus?

What causes you to pull away from fully knowing/trusting him?

Jesus told those who were with him, *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

How has Jesus specifically fed you since our last meeting together (example: a conversation with someone very significant in your life, the ability to set aside a fear, etc.)

What food have you wanted from Jesus but not experienced?

Do you experience being fed with Jesus’ bread of life? If so, try to explain.

“When we think of Jesus as the master for the craft of life, apprenticing ourselves to him means reorganizing our lives around all the things he did and taught, but it means even more. It means learning to be with him throughout the day. An apprenticeship with God begins by being with him, living connected” (Gary Moon, Apprenticeship with Jesus, p. 113).