

## **A DEEPER LOOK 6**

### **“AT THE BREAD OF LIFE”**

*“Jesus replied, ‘I am the Bread of Life.’” John 6: 35*

Bread is a staple of life in most parts of the world. As hard as Michael and I (and others) are trying to avoid eating white bread...even in America, bread is a staple of life. Certainly in the life of our Jewish ancestors, bread has a deep meaning. For 40 consecutive years God provided bread (manna) while His beloved Children wandered in the wilderness. 384 times in the Old Testament and 108 times in the New, bread is discussed or mentioned. We’ve just consumed the symbolic, sacramental bread of Holy Communion while remembering the words of Jesus...*“I am the Bread of Life.”*

There is some history behind this simple statement, and it comes from the Old Testament, and enriches our understanding of the story we’ll shortly dissect. In the OT establishment of the Tabernacle, that portable tent / church; God instructed the priests to ceremoniously present each week 12 flat loaves of the finest flour based bread, as a reminder of God’s provision for the 12 tribes, and most importantly...God’s presence.

The bread on the little gold table inside the Tabernacle, outside the Holy of Holies is called by many different names; with many different meanings. It was called the ‘Bread of the Presence’ as we’ve mentioned, but it’s also called the ‘Show Bread’, meaning that when the bread shows up, God shows up. It is called the ‘Bread of Order’, reminding all of God’s orderliness.

It is also called, ‘The Bread of the Face’. There is nothing more intimate than a person’s face, there is no greater reminder to the children of Israel that God is present; meeting them face to face...than the ‘Bread of the Face.’

It is that bread that undergirds, or lies behind this amazing story from Matthew’s gospel this morning: listen:

*“Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely.’ But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away. ‘Tell her to go away,’ they said. ‘She is bothering us with all her begging.’ Then Jesus said to the woman, ‘I was sent only to help God’s lost sheep – the people of Israel.’ But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, ‘Lord, help me!’ Jesus responded, ‘It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.’ She replied, ‘That’s true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their master’s table.’ ‘Dear woman,’ Jesus said to her, ‘your faith is great. Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was instantly healed.” Matthew 15: 21-28*

From this Canaanite woman who forced Jesus to take a “Deeper Look” into his own heart; I want us to “Look Deeper” at what’s required for us to find the “Bread of Life”; The Bread of the Face, the most intimate Presence of God. Most of us don’t need any more physical bread...but ALL of us need a ‘Deeper’ understanding of the Spiritual “Bread of Life”.

#### **1. FINDING THE “BREAD OF LIFE” REQUIRES FAITH**

*“A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely.’” 22*

Jesus and his merry band of followers left the region of Galilee and traveled NORTH, to the land of Cana. As far I can tell or remember this is the first and only time Jesus and the 12 leave Galilee and travel north. Most scholars concede that this was probably another attempt by Jesus to get his disciples away for some much needed rest, relaxation, and even refuge from the increasingly overwhelming crowds.

On the first day of their retreat, a local woman interrupts their quiet time with cries and screams that shatter their solitude. There are two things to notice that help us understand, and even define this woman’s intrusion as an action of FAITH.

The reputation of Jesus has spread far and wide, but not everyone believed in Him. Apparently this woman did. Her first cries were addressed to “Lord, the Son of David, have pity on me.” ‘Son of David’ was a Jewish phrase that indicated adherence and acceptance that Jesus was indeed God’s Son.

It would not be found coming from the lips of a non-Jew, a Canaanite, a Gentile. This woman had either become a believer in Jesus or deceptively uttered these words to gain Jesus' attention. But here is the second thing that indicates her request was 'Faith...ful'.

This woman knew her need, and who it was that could meet it. Her daughter was possessed with at least one demon, and no one, no remedy, no cure could be found to release her from the demon's grip.

Those are still the same two requirements to discover the Bread of LIFE; faith, and the acknowledgment of our need. Most people never give faith a thought, until they admit they have a need. But notice Jesus' response whether faithful or deceptive:

Jesus said not a word in reply: He completely **ignored** her.

How put off would you have been at that moment? As put off as the depth of your need! Lollygagging around the mall, we are usually put off by an overzealous salesperson; but running late for an appointment, behind schedule for the completion of a project, and we find no one to help us, or acknowledge us or wait on us, and we often become incensed.

Well, being ignored by the hardware salesman is one thing...but being ignored by the Son of God is quite another! How do you think this woman must have felt? She knew HE alone had what she so desperately NEEDED...and he apparently wouldn't give her the time of day. Maybe he was just too tired...(though I'm not Jesus) I've been that tired; my tank gets empty, maybe His did too. I don't know why...but Jesus appeared to ignore her. This leads to the second requirement to find the "Bread of Life":

## **2. FINDING THE "BREAD OF LIFE" REQUIRES DETERMINATION**

*"Then his disciples urged him to send her away. 'Tell her to go away,' they said. 'She is bothering us with all her begging.'" 23*

We might all learn a lesson from this woman. When first overlooked by Jesus, does she just shut up and go home? No, she shouts even louder. When God seems silent in the hearing of our heartfelt cries and prayers do we just give up and conclude He must be too busy helping some team win a football game, or blessing someone else's steak and eggs? Maybe Jesus' initial ignorance was a test of her sincerity? I don't know, but she got the disciples attention, and they come running to him to send her away.

This woman's action disregarded all the rules of cultural etiquette to get to Jesus. Non-Jews were not to speak to Jews. Women were not to speak to men in public, and people from the doghouse of Cana were to have nothing to do with people from the Holy Land of Israel. Yet the desperation of this woman's need drove her to ignore and reject all that.

So let me ask you; to what lengths are you willing to go...to find the Bread of Life we all need? How determined are we to even upset the status quo to get what we need? What rules, regulations, habits, traditions, and cultural expectations, are we willing to sacrifice to encounter the Savior?

Some people are more worried about keeping some unwritten laws than about finding God. We pray Pharisaical prayers seeking revival in our land, but we won't even let God do what He wants in HIS church or in our hearts; let alone speak a kind word to a neighbor or stranger! Now, notice what her determination won her...

Jesus said; *I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel: He **rejected** her.*

This is almost more than we can bear to think about Jesus, who came to save the WORLD! How could he reject her simple request for one simple miracle? Was Jesus just having a bad day? Was he really that tired? Was he that prejudiced? Or was his own understanding of the full impact and extent of his budding Messiahship something he still hadn't fully realized? Not sure, but let's continue:

### 3. FINDING THE “BREAD OF LIFE” REQUIRES WORSHIP

*“But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, ‘Lord, help me!’” 25*

Put yourself in her place a second...she finally breaks through the disciple’s vain secret service attempt at guarding their privacy, and what does she do? Would falling down on your face be your initial reaction when you finally get face to face with this man who has just ignored then rejected your request? Not mine! But think about it.

Worship is the only acceptable reaction whenever we encounter God! I know worship happens in a variety of forms, but this woman provides a model for all we who really want to meet God. She fell down, and cried out; “HELP ME, LORD”. She was not to embarrassed to be emotional, she was not to proper to cry, she was not restricted by what was printed on the bulletin, she was not to proud to grab his feet and cry...”HELP ME...HELP ME.”

So much that passes for worship today is nothing more than sentimental serenades and vain repetitions that make us feel good about our ability to remember the words, even though their deep meanings often go completely undetected! So much of our worship is bound and printed and rehearsed and rubber-stamped; God can’t find His place in the order! So much of our worship is shallow and spiritless and simple, its no wonder unbelievers want nothing to do with us. If the bread of the PRESENCE showed up, we wouldn’t be able to keep the people out! This woman understood worship. Get on your face and cry out to God! Get on your knees and grab hold of His!

Now, certainly her act of worship and adoration will elicit a positive response from Jesus; let’s see:

Jesus said; *it’s not right to give the children’s bread to dogs*: He **rebuked** her. What is up with that??? I don’t get this! Even though it’s disconcerting to not know for sure what the heck is going on here, his response is not the point of the story...her’s is!

### 4. FINDING THE “BREAD OF LIFE” REQUIRES HUMILITY

*'That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their master's table.'* 27

Does she get disgusted when he calls her a dog, and run out the door? No. Is she put off at his continual rebuke? No. Why? BECAUSE SHE HAS A DAUGHTER AT HOME WHO IS POSSESSED!!! Her need wouldn't let her leave! She humbly acknowledges that Jesus is probably right, she is a dog, she is unworthy, she does not possess the social status to be in his presence, she has broken all the rules to get there...but she gets it!

She, and the other Gentile dogs are nibbling on the scraps being left over by the sloppy Jews; and those crumbs have born her faith, and brought her to Him, and to her knees. She gets it! The Jews to whom Jesus so proudly announced a few verses ago he had come to save were rejecting Him, but the Gentiles, the Greeks, the Canaanites were feasting on the bread crumbs that got left over on the floor! She gets it! Her humble response finally got Jesus' full attention. In one translation it says, "*Jesus turned and looked directly at the woman*" (face to face with the Bread of the Face) and said:

*What faith you have, your daughter is healed; She **received** what she came for.*

My friends...have you lived on the crumbs long enough? Have you settled for the boring Manna, while the Show Bread grows stale? Have you settled for a pinch, while you needed the whole loaf? No more...no longer. We are all unworthy...but we are all welcome. When your need reveals the faith, determination, worship and humility necessary to get it met...don't settle for a little cube, devour the whole loaf!!! We've had communion, but are we ready to commune with God? Jesus said: "*I am the bread of Life, the one who HAS ME shall never hunger again.*" Let's eat!

Altar Call: We need to acknowledge our need, salvation, healing, forgiveness, reconciliation. We need to invite Christ to come in. We need to be embraced in His Arms of Love!

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