

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
May 6, 2012

The Bread of Life

Read John 6:22-35

Key verse: “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty’” (John 6:35).

“Use of antidepressants has soared nearly 400 percent since 1988, making the medication the most frequently used by people ages 18-44.” These statistics were reported in a 2011 article in *USA Today*. The article also reported that women are two-and-a-half times more likely to take antidepressants than men and that 23 percent of women aged 40 to 59 take antidepressants.

Rebekah Lyons, writing in *Q Ideas*, provided the following commentary on these statistics:

“Almost 1 in 4. That’s devastating. What’s even more telling is that this study finds that most women don’t seek help to discover the roots of their pain and emptiness. These high functioning women simply don’t have time for therapy.

“We are all susceptible. We tell ourselves a quick fix will do just fine. Whatever pills can keep our head above water, allow us to keep making lunches, paying the bills, getting through sex, carpooling, working out, pursuing that career and so on will just have to do. We don’t want to be the crazy lady at the bus stop. We think to ourselves, ‘Just give me the meds that she’s having. I’ll be fine.’

“Recently, a friend confessed through tears that she is struggling with deep bitterness. Her life doesn’t look the way she imagined it would. She couldn’t reconcile how her life—looking so successful on the surface—could disguise the aching void that brings her tears the moment she lets herself feel any deeper.

“What is most alarming is that many women don’t see past their manicured lives, a grasping for society’s definition of being ‘put together.’ We have pretty ways to mask it, don’t we? We use all kinds of retail therapies and beauty products. We have homes to furnish and decorate, then re-decorate once we tire. We have styles to keep up with, parties to throw and

attend, and a rigorous pace to maintain. While these things are all delightful and beautiful and worth celebrating, the danger comes when we use them to conceal a desperate identity crisis.

“These women are brightly shining stars fading away behind the shadow of everyone they care for.... Their light is dimmer than it used to be, unable to dream beyond their current reality. So they medicate, and numb out.”

The issues involved here are complex, but these statistics and Lyons’ commentary strongly suggest that a spiritual element is involved—a spiritual element addressed in our text, John 6:22-35....

Following Jesus’ miraculous feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-15), the crowds discover that Jesus and His disciples have left the area (vv. 22-23). Wanting to be with Jesus the people go to Capernaum looking for Him (v 24). When they find Jesus, a conversation ensues in which Jesus rebukes the people for following Him in order to gain material rather than spiritual benefits (vv. 25-27).

Then the people ask Jesus, “What must we do to perform the works of God?”(v. 28). Jesus makes it clear that eternal life is not something that we achieve but something to be received by faith (v. 29).

In verses 30-34, the conversation turns to a comparison between the manna which God had once provided to the Hebrew people in the desert and the “true bread” which God now gives to the whole world. The people then respond by saying to Jesus, “Sir, give us this bread always” (v. 34).

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever, comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty’” (v. 35).

To a world where people still seek happiness and meaning through things that cannot satisfy, Jesus offers a way to lasting fulfillment. That way is the way of trusting Christ to save us, forgive us, and fill our hearts daily with His presence and power. Jesus, the bread of life, offers to satisfy our deepest spiritual hungers. But just as the manna of the Old Testament could not be stored but had to be received daily, so we must feed upon Christ daily if we are to know this fulfillment of our deepest spiritual needs.

Pastor Chris Seay was preaching to his congregation about the kingdom of God that is coming. After the worship service, a young man grabbed Seay and said emphatically: “Pastor, the kingdom [of God] is already here. Every Sunday I used to be in this same neighborhood. I used to come down here to a bar called Emo’s, and I’d start every night with a drop of ecstasy on my tongue and wash it down with Bicardi 151. That’s what I did Sunday after Sunday. Now I come [to a worship service] instead, and I finish the evening with the body of Christ on my tongue, and I wash it down with the blood of

Christ. This is the kingdom of God” (from Seay’s book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*).

To women and men, to young and old, the promise of Jesus beckons: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

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