

## **A Drive Down Washington Boulevard**

Scripture: John 6:35 & 41 – 51

6/27/21

The aroma of fresh baked bread - Ummm! - it is one of the most delicious smells. The aroma of fresh baked bread will make your mouth water! I can remember driving down Washington Boulevard in Williamsport PA during my childhood smelling the Strohman's Bakery cooking fresh bread. I love that drive. I remember rolling down my window no matter what time of year so I could get a better whiff of the fresh bread. I can remember sticking my head out the window of the car like a dog to get a better smell of fresh bread baking. I can remember my dad yelling at me for sticking my head out the window also, but let us now dwell there because I in a moment!

You know, if I close my eyes now I can still smell that aroma of fresh bread. Oh, good stuff!

Many times I have heard someone describe the smell of fresh bread as heavenly or divine. Think of that, fresh bread smells heavenly or divine! Nice connection!

Indeed, there seems to be something otherworldly about pure sensual pleasure derived from feasting on plain, ordinary bread.

However, when Jesus called himself the bread from heaven, Jesus was not talking about the yummy smells and taste of fresh baked bread. The context in which something is said often helps us understand the intent. Let us look at the context of Jesus' teaching.

Jesus had just fed the five thousand on the far side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had returned to Capernaum. Some of the people went to Capernaum and sought Jesus out. This caused Jesus to accuse them of being more interested in a free meal than they were in the free grace of God.

The people asked Jesus what sign he could give to prove he was sent from God. They reminded Jesus that Moses had fed his ancestors with manna from heaven. They reminded Jesus that Moses had given them fried manna, BBQed manna, stir fried manna, baked manna - all the manna they wanted.

Jesus corrected them - Jesus insisted that it was God, not Moses, who had given the people the manna. Then Jesus made his great claim - listen to these words - *'I am the bread of life .... I am the bread of life that came down from heaven!'* Let me repeat those words Jesus said - *'I am the bread of life .... I am the bread of life that came down from heaven!'*

The Jews could neither understand nor accept these words of Jesus because they knew him as the son of Joseph & Mary. They knew Jesus as a carpenter's son from some remote town.

But Jesus went even further - Jesus identified this bread of life with his own body and blood. Jesus told the people that they must eat in order to enter into the life that death cannot touch.

The people did not get it. They were stuck with manna as the bread from heaven or the grain of heaven or the bread of angels. So when Jesus made his claim to be the bread from heaven, it was in itself a claim to be divine.

This is the first revelation by Jesus that he is divine. Jesus is the bread from heaven.

One of the most ancient religious ceremonies was a meal in a sacred place at which a group of worshipers would eat part of the meat that had been sacrificed on the altar together. At such a feast, whomever they were worshiping was believed to be present and the god would enter into the worshiper with the eating of the meat of the sacrifice.

Perhaps Jesus' audience knew of such a tradition and they would make the connection with Jesus' words. One thing is certain - Jesus was making one of his greatest claims and one of his greatest offers!

In Psalm 34:8 it says - 'Taste and see that the Lord is good.'

We have five senses - sight, hearing, smell, touch, & taste - it is taste that the Psalmist selects to describe the religious experience. Consider these aspects of tasting and compare it with the partaking of the Bread from Heaven:

- \*Taste is the most personal of all the senses

- \*All of the other senses can be shared outwardly and publicly

- \*Taste is the only internal sense

- \*Taste is the only individual sense.

Taste can be dangerous. Taking food into our bodies can poison us or make us sick. We are vulnerable when we taste food.

I learned this fact clearly on my mission trip to India several years ago. I was told to not eat or drink anything that was not prepared in our kitchen where we were staying. Our kitchen had a European water filtration system. We did go to some restaurants on our trip but they were approved places also, so I ate there.

When we visited some market places on our trip, I was advised to not eat or drink anything there except chia tea because the water for the tea was boiled to make it. I fell in love with chia tea in India!

Our general rule was at any market place was: if you cannot peel it – do not eat it! At every market place I was offered local food from sidewalk vendors, I always declined it except one time the dentist from the hospital bought me a fruit Danish like item and she called my name and I turned around and she pushed it into my mouth. I chewed it up thinking it would be impolite to spit it out. It tasted great but for the next few days I kept wondering if I was going to get sick. I did not – THANK GOD!

For good or bad, tasting and eating food changes us. Just look at me to see that. My nickname as a child was 'Bones' because I was very skinny. Now look at me – 'Bones' sure does not fit now!

We become like what we eat. Our weight, our health, and even our attitude can be changes by our choice of food.

So, partaking of food involves trust! We exercise such trust every day, often at the hands of strangers as we eat in restaurants. We trust God every time we eat of this bread!

The second half of Psalm 34:8 reads - 'Blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord.' Although, the experience of tasting is personal, the invitation to taste is universal. All must eat. No one can live without eating. All must eat. All are invited to the table of the Lord. All can eat. God has given each of us the capacity to dine upon his grace.

So join me on this Sunday as we journey down memory lane to smell the fresh bread and let us taste and see that the lord is good!

AMEN.

Let us conclude this message by singing 'Take Our Bread' #413.