

WHOEVER COMES WILL NEVER HUNGER

John 6:24-35

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August 5, 2018

LISTEN: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/whoever-comes-will-never-hunger/>

I have a pastor-friend from Canada who lived in Paris, France for several years. He said no one went to a grocery store and bought pre-sliced packaged bread. Each morning, they walked to the local bakery and bought fresh bread. Fresh bread! It's delicious, isn't it? The opposite of stale bread. Have you ever sunk your teeth into stale bread? We know that in that hot, arid climate of Palestine, bread could go stale quickly. As much as it pleased Jesus to feed 5,000 people as described in John 6:1-13, we know that didn't meet the deepest needs of their lives. Jesus was very frank. "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life..." (v. 27) and "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry..." (v. 35).

In [Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*](#), the Red Queen's and Alice are constantly running but remaining in the same spot. "Well, in our country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else—if you run very fast for a long time..." The Queen replies, "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place."

What an apt description of our lives! Running just to stay in place. Eating but never being satisfied. Making money but it is never enough. Being liked or loved but never feeling at peace. Trying to be good enough to earn God's forgiveness, but never feeling clean. Searching and never finding. That sense of incompleteness, that hunger for something more.

Those of you who study the science of nutrition can explain this better than I can, but there is such a thing as empty calories. They are calories that fill but offer little nutrition. Plus, added to that problem, they reduce our desire and consumption of healthy, essential calories, because they dull our appetite. "Do not work for the food that perishes, abut for the food that endures for eternal life..." (v. 27) and "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry..." (v. 35).

There are at least three contrasts drawn by Jesus between empty calories and the bread that lasts. "Works" (plural) contrasts with "work" (singular) in vv. 28-29. It's not our scurrying around, impressing God and others that brings peace, joy, forgiveness, a relationship with God and a full heart. It's the one work—believing, trusting, opening up and receiving.

The other two contrasts are found in v. 32. "Moses gave" (past tense) and "the Father gives" (present tense), a double contrast between Moses and the Father and between gave and give. And that giving is a continuous action. Moses took it as far as he could. But only Jesus nourishes eternally. Jesus Christ meets the deepest

needs of our lives. His life goes down deep into the life of the Father. Deep down into the ancient covenant promises of the Father.

And what a privilege! We are guests at this table, where he offers grace and mercy. Not what we deserve, but what we need.

Now, as we prepare to move to the table for the Lord's Supper, I'd like us to read this litany responsively.

Leader: Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

People: At this table, our host, the Lord Jesus Christ, meets us with compassion and open arms.

Leader: This is a table for sinners; this is a table of mercy.

*ALL: At this table, we both proclaim the gospel and experience it. Amen.**

*Gordon Smith, *A Holy Meal*, p. 58.

