

## Bread From Heaven

August 8, 2021 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

John 6:26-27

Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

### ✚ Introduction: the priority of spiritual matters

I happen to like food, maybe a little too much. When I was a child, I loved toast with grape jelly. But as a very picky eater, I insisted that only Welch's Grape Jelly was satisfactory. My parents, who did not always agree to my whims, bought Welch's Grape Jelly. My maternal grandmother always had Welch's Grape Jelly when we visited. It wasn't until years later that I found out that Grandma bought generic grape jelly and simply cleaned and re-used the jar with the Welch's label. I never caught on. So food is important, but my taste buds weren't as refined as I thought. Food was also important to the people in this episode of the life of Jesus. He had miraculously fed thousands, and they wanted more, food that is. They wanted more food. My study Bible noted that the emperors of Rome kept the populace under control with lots of free entertainment and food. Jesus had a different agenda.

What He said points to Himself and to the recent miracle He performed, and to the comparison to the ancient miracle of Manna from heaven for Moses and the children of Israel, but there is even more to it than that. Connections with Scripture that, I believe many do not notice or reflect on them. But we should reflect. The destiny offered the Christian found in the promises of God are beautiful and empowering. The better we know them, the more they influence how we act and speak in the day-to-day. He mentions food and then He mentions a seal. Let's take a closer look at them.

### ✚ Set the stage

Jesus confronts the crowd for wanting more food and ignoring the deeper meanings of this miracle. In the main verse for today He said, "Do not labor (seek after, strive for) for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." I'd like to make some comments about our Lord's mention of food and we'll look at the significance of the seal later.

### ✚ Labor for food that endures to everlasting life

We know this is another reference to Jesus as He is the Bread of Life and is the Person who grants salvation to all who follow Him. Food is symbolic, but there may still be actual food involved. Here's what I mean. At the end of the Bible, in Revelation 22, Jesus mentions food in heaven. Here it is: Revelation 22:12-14 (NKJV) "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End*, the First and the Last." Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

When Jesus spoke of the pursuit of the food that endures to eternal life He may also have had in mind the Tree of Life, lost to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden so long ago but again available when we enter heaven. Do you look forward to it? Can you try to envision what it will be like to enter heaven? Looking forward to that wonderful day will set your perspective on today in a

stronger and better way.

### God the Father has set His seal on Him

Jesus, in the same sentence about food, mentioned that God the Father had set His seal upon Him. We think the immediate reference is to the recent miracle about food, but like food, there is a little more to this seal. Several verses talk about a seal upon the Christian. One of the most telling is in Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:11-14 (NKJV)

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

The presence of the Holy Spirit forms a sort of seal that sets the Christian apart in the eyes of God the Father. He is, in a way, a down payment of heaven, of the glories and the Tree of Life that awaits us. Keeping this in the back of your mind will help you as you journey through your daily life.

### Application

The application is another reference to being sealed like Jesus, but here the Bible asserts that this hope is to influence how we speak and to what emotions do we give our words

Ephesians 4:29-32 (NKJV)

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

In other words, speak like someone destined for the Tree of Life and sealed by the Holy Spirit as a down payment of heaven. You have better things before you than what was in your past.

### Conclusion

There's a lot in these passages in the Bible, and the words Jesus spoke of Himself carry details of meaning and destiny. Aside from the comparison of Himself to the Manna of ancient times, there is a food in heaven that we anticipate is a tactile representation of the salvation Jesus gives us. His seal reminds us that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Such tokens of joy lift our spirits and salt our speech even when the everyday is hard. All that and more are in His comments about bread from heaven