



A Christmas Feast

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, if that didn't get you in the Christmas mood you are hopeless. I call you Scrooge if you don't get in the mood there. And I don't know what your house looks like but I hope you have some decorations up at your house. That's an appropriate and good thing to do, is it not? I hope you got a tree up. Maybe some presents under the tree. A wreath on the wall. Who knows? Maybe some stockings that are hung. That's a good thing. And I hope it's within eyeshot of a very important room at Christmas called your kitchen. A super important room. You can't have Christmas without a kitchen. I hope you have a kitchen. And adjacent to that is a table. And I trust that your table is set. Perhaps it's got its place settings out right now. But my ultimate hope for you is that it soon will look something like this. That would be good. Or maybe you're one of those who does it like this. Or maybe you'll man up this Christmas and do it like this. That might be good.

Well, however you do it I just hope that there's a lot of food that you have at Christmas. And I do hope that you indulge in that food. It's important. I hope you have plenty of food. I hope you don't stay on your diet at Christmas. I hope you're willing to go off your diet and you're able to just pile your plate high and enjoy a lot of good and rich foods as you remember the birth of Christ. And feasting, having a Christmas feast, having feasts in light of things that we're remembering that are biblically significant, that's not a man-centered idea, that's not a man-made idea, that's a divine idea. Matter of fact, God, when he was laying out the calendar for Israel said I'm going to put some calendar events, some special days. That's what holiday means, a special holy set-apart day. And you're going to have some of these in your calendar and you are going to eat a lot.

You're going to feast. Matter of fact that's what he called them, they were called sometimes the feasts of Israel. And there was a handful that God set in place in the Mosaic Law, and Israel built upon that throughout some biblical history in the exile and also in the inter-testamental period of the Maccabean revolt. All the things that took place in history, they would add to that. And eventually the Hebrew calendar was filled with these feasts that they had, very special days, holidays, feast days. But it all started with God making very clear you're going to get together and you're going to celebrate something that's significant and important and biblically central to what God is doing in the world and in your nation and in your life, in your community. And I want you to feast.

Take a look at this one. This is from the Feast of Tabernacles, where they look back at God's provision throughout the wilderness wanderings. And here's how God puts it in Leviticus 23, he says, "When you have gathered in the produce of the land," takes place in the harvest, "you shall celebrate," I love that it is put here in the Scripture as a feast, "to celebrate the feast of the Lord." And it's not for, you know, a night and a day. It's for a week. This is an awesome thing, right? "For seven days," you are supposed to feast. And don't just grab anything out of the cupboard. You are to take "on the first day the fruit of splendid trees." Get the best food you have out there and "the branches of the palm trees." And so now we're talking about decorations, which our stage is filled with here this afternoon. We celebrate by festively



putting out decorations. And then you're going to have a celebration with food and you're going to be happy. And you feel like God can't command me how to feel. Well, he just did. When it comes to celebrating the good things he does, "you're going to rejoice before the Lord."

Such an important reminder that God wants us to celebrate. If you look at Israel in obedience to that, when they were, and often they were, they would get together, they would have, you know, meals, tables filled with food, the best food that they had. They would pull out decorations. You know, they would turn on the music. Music was a part of the celebrations as well. And while the table may have looked a little different than your table tonight, the Mediterranean, you know, food, you might think well that's all healthy food. It wasn't all healthy food. There was plenty of food that was rich and fattening. Let's just put it that way. To use the words of the psalmist, he says, "My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich foods." Now look at the combination here, "and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips." Right? The food and feasting of the best food that we have. Right? The delicacies of what the land produces. I put all that out there. "My lips will praise you with joyful praise ... for you have been my help."

We look back at what God has done and we say, "Look what you've done. Look how you provided. Look how you broke into time and space and did things for us. And we're going to pull out all the stops. We're going to feast, we're going to celebrate. We're going to have music. We're going to have celebration. We're going to have decorations and we're going to rejoice." This is a purposeful thing that God built into the calendar, and it was punctuating the calendar and it wasn't all the time. Right? You can't imagine, God didn't tell people to feast every day or, you know, all 52 weeks of the year. That's not the case. Matter of fact, just like them, a lot of their food was just whatever they could grab that day, right? They got food on the run.

And one of the words that Jesus used to describe that, and it's used throughout the Bible, is that we talk about bread, your daily bread. We want to pray that God would provide us just what we need, what we need to get by. And so we were taught to pray, "Lord, give us this day our daily bread." Bread was really a synonym of everyday life. It was used in metaphorical ways in the Old Testament to talk about just kind of living life and talking about the bread of our labor. And bread was just such a primary staple of life, and they had it every day. Now, our choices today, as we think about giving us our daily bread, it's much more varied. And we have, you know, a splendid variety of things in our grocery store. It's kind of a, you know, a cacophony of colors and options for you as you go out and try and figure out what you can feed your family this week.

But one thing you'll still see, a big aisle in the store, is your bread aisle. And we still have the staple of bread, one of the most fundamental foods, not only here in America wrapped in, you know, plastic, but if you traveled around the world, as many of you have, you can go to places all the time. Just see this big bread aisle, bread display. Everybody's eating bread. Bread is just the primary staple of life. And I'll tell you what, it's pretty good. And most of you know that. Someone delivered a loaf of fresh bread to my house this week. And I'm not saying that so



the rest of you would do the same. But I can tell you I really enjoyed that bread. It was so good. And I mean, I don't know. I don't know if I could live on it every single day, but if I had butter, I could probably live on it every single day. It's just so good to have fresh, wonderful-smelling, freshly baked bread. There are few things that are better than that. And it's a fundamental filling thing that gets you through, you know, your everyday life. It's a good thing.

As I said, we have plenty of options in our day. No one is lacking here in this auditorium from food. We get plenty of food and plenty of food options. And God provides us richly here in this particular time, in this particular place. And we're grateful for that. But we know what it's like and we can imagine what it's like, at least in our minds and in history and looking around the world, there are times when people don't have these options, they actually have nothing. And Jesus purposefully put himself in Matthew Chapter 4 in the position of having nothing. And he went out into, the Bible says, the wilderness for 40 days, and he fasted. He fasted and he got so hungry, it's interesting how the Bible puts it, "and he became hungry." Well, of course, he'd be hungry after 4 hours. But he's hungry out there in the wilderness and Satan comes in, tempts him to turn these rocks that you can only imagine as he looked at rocks, thinking that, you know, that kind of is the shape of bread, he was tempted and it was all about his hunger and his appetite.

Which, of course, you think, well, I can't fault you for that. I mean, that's what we all need. We need bread. We need bread to live on. We need our daily bread. Forty days is a long time to go without your meals. Right? But if you think about the 40 days, we know something in the biblical history called a 40-year period of time, when we talk about the wilderness, we think about the people of God being led out of slavery in Egypt. And because of their sin, their lack of trust in God, God said you're going to spend 40 years in the wilderness. You're not going to be able to take all your cattle that they did come with, you're not going to be able to plow fields. You're not going to set up shop anywhere. You're going to go into the desert, into the Sinai Peninsula and wander around in the desert. And you're going to be kind of in tough shape, right? You've got some goat's milk and you've got, you know, some livestock, but you can't just deplete it all in the first, you know, month. They're going to spend years out here in the desert.

So you want to talk about that prayer from the New Testament applying to an Old Testament situation, trust me. They were praying it much more ardently than we've ever prayed it when they thought about the fact, "God, we're going to starve out here." Right? "Give us this day our daily bread." Well God said, I'm leading you in the desert and you're there. Even though you're under my discipline, you're not going to enter the land of milk and honey right now, you are going to be in this wilderness and I am going to provide for you. I'm going to provide for you the basic staple that all of you need to eat. He said, "I'm going to rain," look at this sentence now, "bread from heaven for you." I'm going to bring down bread from heaven. "And the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day." That's what Exodus 16 promises that you're going to get bread and it's going to come from heaven.

Now, "Shamayim" In Hebrew, the word for "heaven" can be translated to either in the context, refer to the sky or space, or even God's presence where God lives. And so the idea here is, of

course, is something, as we see as it plays out in history, is going to come out of the sky and settle on the ground, and you're going to have to go out and collect it. And you know this under the name of manna and you've pictured it, right? You just go and look at pictures of people painting this scene where they have to go out and collect everyday these bushels full of this stuff they called, what's the name of it? Manna. And you know what the word "manna" means in Hebrew, do you know? Well, people don't know. So if you know, you can write a book on it because we don't know.

But, you know, lexicons and linguists will say the best guess we have just based on connecting some dots in ancient Semitic languages, is it probably means "what is it?" That's funny, right? The "what is it? Bread." Now, God called it "Lechem." Lechem means "bread" in Hebrew. But it's a kind of "what is it? bread," because it's a weird kind of bread that's going to come out of the sky. Now this is odd, but here's how it's described in Numbers Chapter 11. It says, "Now the manna," the 'what is it? bread,' "was like coriander seed," which probably, I don't know, if you know what that looks like, but if you don't I'm providing some visuals for you. Here's coriander seed. And it's going to look that size, but it's going to have the appearance, if you look at it, of "bdellium," and bdellium is a lighter colored, whitish, you know, yellowish substance. So the combination of these two is what this "what is it? bread," this manna looked like.

Now the people would go out, the Bible says, and they would gather it, just like Exodus said that they would. They would go out and gather it and then they would grind it in their hand mills. And they would beat in mortars and they would boil it in pots. Right? Sometimes they did that, the various ways they would prepare it. But in the end, the primary staple was they would make it into cakes. And these cakes, you think, well, what does this look like? I'm collecting it off the ground of the desert. This is odd.

What would it taste like? Well, there are a couple of passages that describe how it tasted, and it didn't taste bad. Just like lechem, it tasted like bread. And the taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil. And that's not bad. I had a little of that this week and it tastes really good. And they were provided bread basically from the sky that God said I'm going to give you so that you, though you don't have all the things you used to eat back in Egypt, you don't have the leeks and the onions and all the things that you have, the delicacies of Egypt. I'm going to provide for your basic provision. You're going to have your daily bread and it will be provided for you. The taste of it is going to be like cakes, like raised bread baked with oil.

Another passage describes that it tastes like it was flavored with honey. So this was good tasting. And how did they get it? Well, very clearly. Numbers 11 and "When the dew fell upon the camp in the night the manna," the 'what is it? bread,' "it fell with it." And it was just the provision, just as God had promised. I'm about to rain bread, just like rain would come down and dew would come down. I'm going to rain bread from heaven, from the sky for you. Amazing. God's taking his people into the wilderness. They were under his judgment. And yet he says, I'm going to give you what you need to eat. Here's your bread. Everyday gather your bread.



1,475 years later, Jesus is in his public ministry and he is out there at one particular scene, he does it a couple of times, but in one particular very famous scene, he provides the people with bread. There's nothing to eat. A holiday was coming up, couldn't go in and buy food. They were out there not far from the shores of the Sea of Galilee. And Jesus has to feed them. He wants to feed them. He tells the disciples "What are we going to feed them?" And they say, "Well, we don't have money to feed them and we can't possibly feed all these people. There are over 5,000 people there." And what does he do? He says, "Well, I'm going to make some food for them." And a kid's got a lunch. He takes the lunch, the fish and the loaves, and he multiplies it.

Now, this is the God who created everything. This is the thing John 1 says, "Nothing in the world was made that has been made that Jesus wasn't the agency of that making." He is the creator and he's making bread just out of nothing. Just like he does throughout his ministry. He creates something with the word and the authority of his power that has an appearance of a history, an age that it never had. And here he provides bread as though it had been grown or whatever, a wheat-based or whatever it was, and it was baked and it had oil in it or honey in it. It was like he was providing this. And I'm telling you, if Jesus is going to make bread, it isn't going to be moldy, it's not going to be stale. It's going to be the best bread you ever had. And sure enough, it was.

And how do I know that? This passage ends in John Chapter 6 by them saying, "We want to make you king, the bread king. You're going to be the king because you've just done a great thing and a great miracle and it's awesome." They want to make him king. A little scene in between the feeding of the 5,000, a scene of him coming on the sea in the storm. I'm not interested in that story right now. It's a very interesting story. But he goes away and the people come back to say, "Where's the bread king? Where's the guy we wanted to make the king? He has provided us the best bread we ever had and didn't cost us a cent. I mean, we had thousands of people out here and he fed us all."

They came and they found him near his hometown. He went out west across the Sea of Galilee, to Capernaum, near Capernaum. And he's there. And the people confront him and they say, "We want more bread, we want more of that bread." And he says, "You didn't get it. That bread was a sign to show you who I am and you weren't interested in knowing who I am. You just came to find me because all you want is to fill your bellies with more free bread. And I know it was good. I made it. I get it. But you don't... You're not interested in what I'm really interested in showing you." And they said, well, they start talking Bible with Jesus, which is not a good idea because they're going to lose.

But they said, "Well, come on, you want us to believe who you are? Do a sign. I brought my neighbor, I brought my friend, I brought my cousin. What sign are you going to do that we may see and believe you? What work are you going to perform? Now let me think... Bible. I got an idea. Our forefathers ate the manna, the 'what is it? bread' out there in the wilderness. Why don't you do that? Matter of fact, the Bible says in Nehemiah as he looks back from Nehemiah's day, on the miracle of the manna. He gave bread from heaven to eat. He gave them bread from heaven. So we want you to do a sign. And I got a miracle for you. Do the



miracle you did across the sea and do it here because I got people here that want to believe in you. So you said it was a sign. Do some bread miracles. Hey, bread king. Make some more bread for us."

Jesus turns and he says, "You've got to learn a lesson here." Whenever he says this, he's about to say something firm. "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven." Remember heavens got a double meaning. A triple meaning. It can either mean God's throne room, it can mean space where the planets hang out, or it can mean the sky. "It wasn't Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but my Father gives..." Now note the tense of the verb here changing. Right? "Moses GAVE..." You want me to repeat the thing that you say Moses did, that God actually did, the Father did, but he gave that 1,475 years ago. You now need to realize that my Father GIVES..." Right now, present active indicative in Greek. Sometimes in Greek grammar class we call it the "continuative tense." Here he's giving it right now. He's providing what? He's providing you the "true bread from heaven."

Now all we got are these double references here, right? He's going to provide something true and it's bread, right? But it's not something with yeast in it that you baked and it's coming from heaven. And I'm not talking about the sky like when the dew falls from the sky at night. I'm not talking about manna. I'm talking about something else. And he goes and he leans into this. Listen to this, "For the bread of God," the real bread of God, it's not an it, it's a he. "Is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." What a strange and cryptic thing to say. And yet they had all this preparation to know exactly what he was saying. Right? I have come, I've come to earth. Here's how John 1 starts. Right? "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." God sends his Son from heaven and he's going to compare himself now to this thing that we all want and need, and that is everyday food. "The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Then he really leans in. Jesus, said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me," now look at this parallel set of verbs, "whoever comes to me and whoever believes in me." Whoever comes to me and whoever believes in me. If you turn your attention to me and you put your trust in me. Right? If you turn your attention to me... That's so different than me just getting, as so many people think about Jesus, if I need a copilot when I'm coming in for a bumpy landing. Right? Or if I need insurance, it's like finding an insurance agent. You get him, you sign the contract, and you forget about it until you have a fender bender. No, no, no. He says, "you got to come to me, you got to believe in me." This is like a marriage relationship. This is not like an insurance agent, right? This is about a daily situation where a lamb follows a shepherd, right? Where the disciple follows the teacher. Where there's a relationship between people that is an everyday reality.

But if you would come to me, turn to me, and put your trust in me, an ongoing relationship. Now look at the promise. Right? "You shall not hunger." Double meaning here. "And you shall never thirst." You're not going to hunger. You're not going to thirst. You've got to put your trust in me. You've got to turn to me. And then just like when you have bread, so much bread, like I had the other night where you pushed away from the table, you said, "I can't have anymore."



I'm totally satisfied. I have all that I need." That's the way it's going to be. I mean, just think about the analogy. It's like food. You've got food and you have enough food. You can't eat anymore food, which I hope is a reality for you tonight at some point, I can't eat another bite. I've had enough. I feasted on this. Never hunger. Never thirst.

Scripture likes to talk about the pangs of hunger, the desire for food, which we have every single day. We desire and crave to have our stomachs filled because we want and we need and we crave and we satisfy with food. The Bible likes to analogize that with what we ultimately need, which is something that is not temporal, that can't be eaten, it can't be earned. It can't be acquired by interviewing at some great company or a paycheck or a car or a house, or a relationship or a baby. Nothing can provide this but something transcendent. Here's how it's put, for instance, in the psalms, Psalms 63:1. "My soul thirsts for you." Right? This is an analogy. I'm hungry. I'm craving the God who made me, my soul thirsts for you. And here's the problem with this world. It's in a dry and weary land where there's no water.

There's nothing you can put in that God-shaped vacuum of our lives that's going to satisfy. Whatever it is that you think you want, whatever it is you think you need, whatever you think if I just had that job, if I just had that thing, if I just had that opportunity, if I just had this acquisition of whatever it is from this planet, we think, well that'll do it. That'll satisfy. And the Bible says that's not how it works. Philosophers, theologians, great thinkers in the Church have always contemplated this idea. It's like Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes, right? "God has set eternity in our hearts." Right? There's something about how God has made us that nothing in this world, as C.S. Lewis says, is going to satisfy us. It just won't. There's a desire that the temporal things of this life won't satisfy. We need, we have a hunger. But you see, it's nothing that's going to satisfy. But the analogy is like when you eat good food and you're satisfied, when you're thirsty and you drink and your thirst is quenched. The Bible says God can do that, but in this world you can't find that.

God has made people to want something beyond this life. And you should feel a bit like a traveler passing through this life. Christians used to say this: when I was growing up, this world is not our home, but we're just passing through. And in reality, that's how Jesus wanted people to think. And he said, "What you need is me. I'm the one who gets you from here to there. And no one's going to get to the fulfillment that you really need, which is this God-shaped desire, that I provide." "No one comes to the Father," John 14:1, "except through me." You need to turn your attention to me and put your trust in me.

Augustine in the fifth century said it well. He wrote a book called The Confessions, which was key in Western civilization and thinking, an amazing intellect, North Africa. He says this as he opens up his book on the confessions. He prays this prayer. "You have made us for yourselves, O, God." We were created. We were created to know God, to enjoy God, to be satisfied in God. And the problem is "our hearts are restless." Another way to put it, hungry, thirsty. "Until they rest in you." Until we find fulfillment in you. Until we have that thirst quenched. Until we have our hunger satisfied. God is the thing that we need. Christ is the only way to acquire a relationship with God. And Jesus is saying it in such a profound way with something everyone can understand. When we have good food, we have something that



satisfies, he says, I am the person in your life that, like bread at a meal, satisfies your hunger. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst." Right?

This is the whole point of his John 6 discourse. The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. And that's why I'm preaching this on Christmas Eve, because that's what Jesus did. He came to earth to solve our problem and to meet our ultimate need. And we're trying to often ignore the ultimate need that we have by all the other things we're trying to stuff into our lives. What you really need, what I really need is a relationship with the living God. And the world is a tough place to try and live for God and to find satisfaction in God. But the psalmist was right. Our soul ultimately thirsts for God. And as Augustine put it, we're going to be restless until we find rest in him. Our hearts need to know the living God.

Jesus says it in so many different ways I've come. "The Son of man has come." To what? "To seek and save the lost." Now, here's the problem. When he says you've got a need and it's met in me. Right? He's pointing out a need that they think they don't have. What they need is a free lunch. We want some more of that good bread. And he says, no, no, what you really need is something you're not willing to admit, which is the whole theme of the book of John. You're missing the concept of what is needed. And he says, "I've come to seek and save the lost." I've come to give you the answer to your problem. I have come, he says, to call sinners to repentance. And here's where Jesus loses people. Right? You have a problem and the problem is sin. And that's the reason you can't find the ultimate solution that you need, because you're not dealing with the sin problem.

We think the sin problem is what's going to make us fulfilled and satisfied. Jesus says, no, you need to repent of that and you need to come to me, turn to me, and put your trust in me. And that'll satisfy. That will ultimately be what you need. You start talking about sin. You start talking about the exclusivity of Christ being the only way to solve the problem. Right? You're going to have people struggle with that. Just look at that sentence again. "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me will never thirst." How do you think they responded to that in John 6? Not very well. It says, as the Jews grumbled about him, when he said this, because he said, "I am the bread that comes down from heaven." I mean, you read this on your own. This is filled with their frustration about the fact that he would say such a thing. How dare you say such things.

And if you are a Christian, you are devoted to Christ, you know one thing we're called to do in every generation that Christ leaves Christians in this world, it's to be light and salt and to bring the message of Christ to our generation. And if you're faithful to bring the message that Christ is the exclusive solution to life's problem, which is sin, and we need to repent, turn to him and put our trust in him, you're going to get a bad response, just like they got. Matter of fact, most people, as John 6 points out, are going to say, you've lost it. That's too far. We're not interested. This passage is great. John 6 continues to go deep. It compares manna. Look what Jesus says. He says, "I'm the bread of life." The man in the Old Testament. They ate it.



It was provided and God gave it. And they were satisfied, but only for a time. And eventually every one of them died.

Now he's going to look at big and macro issues. "This is the bread that comes down from heaven that one may eat of it and not die." I just told you, I'm the bread of life, right? I'm the one who comes down from heaven. "And if anyone eats this bread, he'll live forever." There is something that you need that's going to be put on clear, urgent display at the moment you die. "And if you would imbibe and eat of me," he says, "you will live forever." You're never going to die. As he said at the funeral of Lazarus, "Even if you die yet shall you live?" Of course we're going to die temporally. But the real issue is something eternal. And I'm going to solve that problem.

And then he leans in even harder. Look at this. "And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh," my physical death. That's why at Christmas and every Christmas Eve, if this is the only time you come, maybe at Easter too, you hear me talk about the birth of Christ and I can't get away from talking about the death of Christ. Because if it's really about the fact that the bread of life is going to give his life for the world, and the only way he can do that is to die on a cross, well, then the focus of the manger has to eventually get us to think about why he came in the first place. And that is, as he says, "to give his life as a ransom for many." That his flesh would become the target of God's justice toward your sin and mine. And if we would repent of it, God would take our sin, lay it on his cross and all that he did from the time he was an infant till the time he died, all the righteous deeds he did, all of that perfect righteousness would be applied to me.

Hearing this, people lost it. They struggled with it. They said, we don't like any of this. You need to be the exclusive priority of our lives? Which in essence is what he was saying every day, imbibing in me, taking part in me, eating me. This is such a strange concept. And the whole passage culminates with this. John 6:66, which is kind of ironic. Here it is. John 6 6 6. Ready? "And many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him." And we're not talking about Christians here. Disciples is a broad term. It refers to anyone who had made Jesus their teacher. That's what it means a "learner." They're learning from Christ.

And there are a lot of people who I meet over the years now, 34 years in South County preaching the Bible, I've met a lot of people that I'll see it at Costco or Target or whatever, and they used to sit here in church and listen to me preach every week. And now they're not in any church, not listening to anyone preach because they're not interested anymore. They've turned away. Why? Because the teaching got a little too personal, a little too much about my sin and about God's, you know, exclusivity in terms of salvation through Christ. They don't want it anymore.

See if we get real clear about the problem and the solution, a lot of people say, I'm not interested. And so many of the learners of Christ, they were done. They turned away. And you think that's where the passage would end, but it's not where the passage ends, because Jesus now turns to his disciples and says, "Hey, I want to talk to you guys." He says, "Well, do you want to go away as well?" It's just like Christ to take a situation that looks like this is



bad. And he goes, "Now I want to see where you stand, where are you?" If it gets hard, you start talking about the fact that sin is the problem and I'm the solution. I need to be the priority. And it's not about your job. It's not about your family. It's not about your health. It's not about the satisfaction of things or food or cars or houses. Right? "Do you want to go away?" Peter answers for the group, he says, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

And here's a bunch of young guys who left their fishing nets and their fishing business who, by God's grace, as the passage says, God enables them to see beyond the horizon of this life. Look what Peter says next. "You have the words of eternal life." Do you know what the problem is for most of us. We just can't see beyond the border of this life. That's all we can see. I mean, the headlights of our attention just go to the things here in this world. And the Bible would say, listen, you've got to look beyond this life. You need to stop working just for the food that perishes. Because everything you acquire in this life, you're going to leave it behind. It's going to be gone. Nothing in this world can you take to the next world unless it's a relationship with God and his people. That's all that's going to matter.

"Do not work for the food that perishes but work," implied verb, "for the food that endures to eternal life." Worry about things beyond this life. Look at these. It says, "which the Son of Man is willing to give you. Talk about work. Gift. What is that? You set your priorities and as you come to Christ, you put your trust in him. Work for that. Work to get away from all the distractions of everything else to say, this is my priority. Will I still have to pay my mortgage? Sure. Do I need a job? Of course. Do I need insurance? Well, do all that stuff, but don't chase after it like the Gentiles do as Jesus said in Matthew 6. Right? You need to "seek first the kingdom and his righteousness" and all the other things, I'll take care of all that. You got to work "for the food that endures to eternal life and I'm willing to give you that."

And the problem with preaching in a place that has supermarkets full of food and bank accounts that have enough money to not only pay the rent, but to do a few other things on the weekends, is that people are thinking that's what it's all about. This interesting statement that Jesus made, he says, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world?" To gain the whole world, what does it profit? The world! Think if you're the king of the world, you got everything you want. Well, what do you gain? You gain the world. That's awesome. But then he adds this tag. But if you gain the world, what do you really gain "if you forfeit your soul?" If you're just living for this life. If it only is about what you see in the headlights of this life and your attention is just stuck on this world, then you lose it all.

That's why I appeal to you this Christmas Eve, you think about your life. Think about the things that you crave and you desire and you want. The next thing you want to attain, the next thing you want to have that will make you happy, that will satisfy you. You got to look beyond all that. See what matters is eternity. What matters is the Christ who will prepare me for eternity if I put my trust in him. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life." That's why I came to earth. I want to have life. And the payment is my own flesh. And I want them to have life that's abundant. And I'll tell you a lot of people talk about that being here and now. And though there are moments of here and now, I get that. As a matter of fact, the feast holidays,



we're trying to help us experience a foretaste of that when we enter the banquet hall of Christ, when we enter the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, it'll be great.

Right now we have a calendar that mostly it's just drive-through and daily bread. But our holidays, our holidays that we put in place, just like Jesus even adhered to the holidays that the inter-testamental Jews put in place, like the Feast of Dedication or what's called Hanukkah. He was willing to celebrate good things that God had done through Judas Maccabeus, and the revolt during the inter-testamental period. Great. He celebrated those things, as well as the Passover and the Feast of Booths and the Feast of Trumpets and all the rest. Just like we have set things in place that are extra-biblical holidays, like the holiday of celebrating the incarnation. Nothing wrong with doing that. Nothing wrong with putting up lights, nothing wrong with the decorations and the music. We celebrate these things knowing that that should be a foretaste of the abundant life that God wants to provide. Without all the pain, without all the problems, without all the struggles.

So on this Christmas Eve, I just want to encourage you that we are people who are celebrating because the Lord has helped us and we do it, I hope, with some fat and rich foods. That would be a good thing. I hope your table is filled with fat and rich foods. May it be filled with all of that. And may you indulge in that. As the Bible says, everything created by God is good. Just preached on this at Thanksgiving and nothing is to be rejected if it is received, a couple of things, with thanksgiving because it is sanctified, it is set apart, it is made holy by two things, the word of God and prayer. Prayer is the expression of our thanks. Right? Our lips are filled with praise for what God has done, the help he has provided. But it's made holy by the word of God.

The word of God are the lenses we put on. It's called a Christian worldview to interpret everything in this world, including where I'm from, what my problem is and where I'm going. And the word of God it sanctifies things like this. It is a foretaste of the abundance of what God has stored up for those who love him and know him. But we've got to come to know him by knowing that the problem with our lives is seeking the temporal instead of the eternal. And that has to happen. The shift of our priorities. So I encourage you this Christmas Eve to have a great, I mean, a belt-loosening Christmas Eve. Have it. Push back from the table tonight and say, I can't have another bite. Praise God for days like that. Right? But know that the ultimate bread of life, the fulfillment of life, the satisfaction of life is in you turning your attention to Christ and what he provides, the solution that he gave by his death on a cross.

Let's pray. God, help us this Christmas Eve to love you more sincerely from our hearts for what matters for eternity. Get our focus on eternal things, get the headlights of our lives just like a young Peter could say, "You have the words of eternal life. Where else are we going to go?" How great for us to learn. And I pray especially for the young people in this room, that people can early on in life see that they need to seek first the kingdom and the righteousness of that God who's provided this kingdom that one day will welcome us into that kingdom. And to say all the other things, they'll get straightened out. Priorities.



And God, we know that this is really coming to grips with the problem of sin, which is hard for us. You came to call sinners to repentance. And so, God, we want to even now repent of our sin. We need to say that we are sinners. We need to admit the problem and know that the satisfaction is, as Augustine said, is finding our heart's rest in you as you take our sin and nail it to the cross and remember it no more. So God, thanks for another Christmas Eve for us to celebrate. I pray that we would. We pull out all the stops to be grateful, to enjoy, ultimately the bread of life that comes down from heaven.

In Jesus name. Amen.