

What Does the Label Say?

41 So the Jews started grumbling about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They asked, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? So how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

43 Jesus answered them, "Stop grumbling among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the Last Day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 I am not saying that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He is the one who has seen the Father. 47 Amen, Amen, I tell you: The one who believes in me^o has eternal life.

48 "I am the Bread of Life. 49 Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat it and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Holy Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version®, EHV®, ©2019 Wartburg Project, Inc. All rights reserved.

I remember Charlotte. She is sainted in heaven now, but before that, I visited her as a shut in. She had some interesting stories growing up in Germany during World War I. She talked about sewing socks for the soldiers. She also talked about how hard it was to get food. The Allies had put a blockade on Germany and by the end of the war, people were starving. Because they couldn't import enough flour, they would mix things with the flour to make it go further. They nicknamed it "stretch" bread and they took what little flour they had and mixed it with ground lintels, peas, chestnuts or clover. Charlotte remembered buying bread with sawdust mixed in.

I would not want to eat sawdust bread. I assume it doesn't taste good and I am sure it is not very good for you. That is the point Jesus is making in our gospel reading for today. He warns us to be careful what we are eating. So, check the label. Look for the right ingredients so you can receive eternal benefits.

I. Check for the right ingredients.

Do you check labels at the grocery store? If you are not on any special diet, you probably don't pay much attention to the labels. But if you are on a low salt diet, you check the salt content. If you are on a low cholesterol diet, you would check for the amount of fat. If the doctor encourages you to add more fiber, you look for foods that contain fiber.

Jesus is telling us here to check the label. Understand what is going on in our text. Within the past 24 hours Jesus had fed over 5,000 people with one simple sack lunch. It was a miracle. The people wanted more, so they followed Jesus to the other side of the lake. They came looking for more free bread. Jesus turns it up a notch and tells them that he has something better. ***49 Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat it and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven.*** Read the labels. Do you want something that will last for a couple hours or something that will last for eternity?

That is why Jesus is here. Just as God sent manna down from heaven to feed his people for forty years in the desert, Jesus has come from heaven to offer himself as the bread that gives life. You would think they would have lined up for miles to receive this bread of life. They didn't. ***41 So the Jews started grumbling about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They asked, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? So how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"***

Instead of being curious and asking Jesus to explain himself, they started to grumble and complain among themselves. They had an excuse. How can Jesus come from heaven when it is clear he has earthly parents? They know his father. His name is Joseph. They know his mother. They know his address. It is in Nazareth, not heaven. This sounds like a compelling argument. But I am convinced it was only an excuse. Jesus' miracles, the latest of which, the feeding of the five thousand, should have piqued their curiosity and to look past his humble earthly upbringing to ask more questions. But they instantly rejected Jesus' claim. That is because they had no interest in any kind of bread that gives eternal life. They were focused only on another lunch and that's it.

What are you looking for when it comes to church? What are you looking for when you open your Bibles? Why send your kids to catechism classes or Sunday School or our day school? What does Jesus mean to you? We expect too little of Jesus. Analyze your prayers. What is it we pray for the most? The Lord's prayer has seven petitions, six of which deal with spiritual blessings like forgiveness, avoiding temptation and enjoying being a member of God's kingdom. Only one deals with earthly things, give us our daily bread, and it asks for only enough for today, no more. Yet my prayers and your prayers focus mostly on earthly things like good health, good crops, and so on while our spiritual needs are neglected. We expect too little of Jesus when we ask for daily bread. He has more to offer.

That is why I am fascinated by Jesus' response to their grumbling. A doctor will tell you to change your diet if your blood pressure or cholesterol is high. Jesus tells them to change their diet. ***"Stop grumbling among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the Last Day. 45 It is written in the***

Prophets, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ I am not saying that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He is the one who has seen the Father. They obviously had no interest in heaven, so he tells them why they should be interested. They were right. Jesus has an earthly father and mother. But he also has a heavenly Father. He is from God the Father. He has seen him.

But why don't they believe him? They should have. A ten ton airplane should never leave the ground. It is made of metal and is heavier than air. But with the proper engines, it will leave the ground. No one can come to God unless he pulls them to himself. He does this through his Word. When we listen to it, we learn, and what do we learn? Yes, we learn about creation and the Fall, the flood and sin. But we also learn that God sent his one and only Son to this world with one mission: to give himself up to save us. This should have shocked them. They were church-ed. They grew up with the Bible and listened to it many times, but they didn't learn. You can ignore the doctor's recommendation for a special diet. They ignored what God said about the Messiah, and it was hurting him. When he stood before them, they did not believe. In fact, they grumbled and complained.

Yes, we are still looking for two more Sunday School teachers. Next Sunday the Voters will meet and decide whether to extend Becky Ziegler's Call from part time to full time because we have more students. Why? Because these are just two ways we want to open up the Bible. If we don't, there is no way we would ever believe in Jesus as our Savior. We would figure God doesn't mind letting sinful people who have proven that they can hate and hurt each other into his heaven. All we would be really interested in is bread and a comfortable life on earth.

But we want to open up our Bibles so that God can draw us to himself. We don't merely listen to it, we want to learn from it. And what do we learn? That this Jesus who is human is also God from heaven, the Son of God. Yes, he can feed us for a day. But don't settle for that. He comes to feed us for eternity.

I. The earthly benefits of the Bread of Life

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

This week my wife fried up a whole package of bacon. She used it to make us BLT sandwiches. Just as the pig gave up its life so we can enjoy bacon, Jesus gave up his life so we may enjoy heaven. Jesus came down from heaven. He came down and took on flesh for one purpose. So he can offer his flesh and blood as a sacrifice us. His death means our life. And he did it all. All I had to do was eat the BLT sandwich. My wife did all the work of getting it ready for me. Likewise, there is nothing we can add to make heaven more certain for us. Jesus gave up his life to pay for our sins so we all we have to do is believe. ***"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life."*** It is a done deal.

Is this what you want? That smell of bacon lasted all day. There is nothing like the smell of bacon. But the smell of bacon doesn't fill my tummy. It actually makes me more hungry. Even though Jesus gave up his flesh for the whole world, so many people just like to smell it but not eat it. So many are proud of their Christian heritage, but in their hearts all they are concerned about is where their next meal is coming from or how they will get through the day. They stopped asking for forgiveness because, well, their sins don't seem to bother them much as compared to the worries and concerns of this world. Others don't want to go to the Father through Christ. Again, they figure they are good enough all by themselves. The problem, there is no other way to the Father or forgiveness or heaven except through Christ. But there is a way, and it is through Christ. That smell is telling you that there is bacon and a nice BLT sandwich waiting for you. Just eat it.

So, do you read labels? I hope so if you have high blood pressure or cholesterol or if you want to eat healthier? Do you want to read spiritual labels? I hope so, too. Definitely pray to Jesus for daily bread, healing and good crops. But don't settle for daily bread. Jesus has more to offer. ***"Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven."***
INJ Amen.