

"LOAVES AND FISHES"

Reorganized CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
OF Latter Day Saints
Berkeley, California

Sunday, Sept. 24, 1944
8:45 p.m. KRE 1400 KC
Berkeley, Calif.

SCRIPTURE: John 6:25,27 - 33,35

"So when they had crossed the Lake and had found Him, they asked him, Rabbi, when did you come here?" In most solemn truth I tell you," replied Jesus, "that you are searching for me not because you have seen miracles, but because you ate the loaves and had a hearty meal. Bestow your pains not on the food which perishes, but on the food that remains unto the Life of the Ages - that food which will be the Son of Man's gift to you; for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.".....

"For God's bread is that which comes down out of Heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "Always give us that bread." "I am the bread of Life," replied Jesus; "he who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never, never thirst."

To a world which judged by outward forms and observances and customs, came Jesus. Striking through these superficial things, he examined men's hearts, men's motives, men's purposes. He brought mercy to judgment, understanding in place of condemnation for those whose motives are pure but their deeds short of their best desires. For those whose deeds were outwardly correct, but whose hearts were far from their worship, he brought only scorn and condemnation.

If we always knew the motives of men, how different things would be in this world. Many a man now venerated and respected for his outward show of sanctity might prove to be going through the outward forms for some ulterior motive. Many a man whose outward observances might not be so good, might have motives of the purest.

Some people follow Christ for the same reason that they would follow a medicine show of the recent past. Their contact with the church furnishes them amusement, excites their imagination, satisfies their curiosity. The church furnishes them with the wonder of the super-natural, the warm emotional glow of spirits in the fervent zeal of worship, the pageantry and color of ritual, and sometimes even the amusements and entertainments which have been refined, but nonetheless copied from the medicine show and modern vaudeville.

Some people join a church and follow Christ because they want something which they think can be had free through this medium. Such were the people who followed Jesus into the mountain by the side of Galilee, who were there fed with the loaves and fishes. They came not particularly to hear his teachings, or to join their lot with his, but because they had seen his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. No doubt some of them hoped that they, too, might be healed with no trouble, no cost, not obligation. Perhaps some of them came out of curiosity, wondering merely what was to happen next.

After the five thousand had been fed, the motives of these people suddenly changed. They had been looking for miraculous healings. Instead they had seen miracles of supply. Five barley loaves and two small fishes had fed five thousand, with twelve baskets-full remaining. What a man this would be to have as king! Nobody would have to work any more. Everybody could spend his time just sitting about, listening to the beautiful words that fell from Jesus lips. And whenever anyone got hungry, or needed new clothes, or healing, Jesus could wave his hand, and the need would be supplied.

These were the people who desired to take Jesus by force, and make him a king. But Jesus had no desire to be king over such a slothful, grasping, self-seeking people, and the scripture says that he departed again into a mountain, leaving them with only their wistful wishes that they might have a king who could bring them bread without work.

Not for long was Jesus' isolation maintained, however. The crowd which had been fed by the loaves and fishes followed him around the sea of Galilee, and caught up with him on the other side. They had come first to him desiring miracles. Now they were after more loaves and fishes. "You are searching for me not because you have seen miracles, but because you ate the loaves and had a hearty meal," said Jesus. "Bestow your pains not on the food which perishes, but on the food that remains unto the Life of the Ages - that food which will be the Son of Man's gift to you."

There is a lesson in this incident for all of us Christians. Let us not be too hasty in condemning these people who sought after Jesus only that they might have daily bread. Some people in THIS day have been known to join the church only because the church has a reputation of helping out its members who are in need. Some people don't want religion - only a daily handout. But that's not all that Jesus meant to teach, or to warn against, when he said, "Bestow your pains not on the food which perishes."

There are two ways of using spiritual bread. Spiritual bread used one way gratifies the appetite, gives us a comfortable, full, satisfied feeling all over. It thrills us with the emotional urge to be better, and to do good; and then disappears next morning like yesterday evening's dinner, leaving us as hungry and unsatisfied as ever. Spiritual bread used another way gives strength for service -- is the meat which endures unto everlasting life - the living bread, which if any man shall eat, he shall live forever.

Those who had been fed by the loaves and fishes were satisfied to receive bread which endured only for a short time. Most of us, today, are just as content. Our church going, our prayers, our religious exercises, tend to become enjoyable ends in themselves. They give us a great deal of self-satisfaction and pleasure - perhaps even a degree of genuine joy and happiness. But it is the kind of pleasure and satisfaction which bears no fruits - which wears off and is forgotten the next day. The pleasure, and the life-giving qualities of the bread are only temporary, because the bread cost us nothing. It extracted from us no return, no fruitage of thanks or of service. It required no exertion to obtain. We merely attached ourselves to the

never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never, never thirst." But once we really accept Jesus, from the heart, when we make a covenant with him in the waters of baptism, we take upon us his way of life -- the way of self-denial - the way of service. We ask for things not for ourselves, or not that we may merely be sustained from day to day, but that we might have strength to serve others, and enough to share with them in their need. There is a beautiful hymn the first verse of which expresses this thought we wish to emphasize: "I thank thee, Lord, for strength of arm to win my bread, And that beyond my need, is meat For friend unfed: I thank thee much for ~~my~~ bread to live, I thank thee more for bread to give." James says that we often do not receive, when we ask in the manner of those who came seeking loaves and fishes, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Do we follow Jesus seeking the daily satisfaction of our spiritual and physical appetites, only that we may have pleasure ourselves? Or do we seek Jesus because he has the words of ETERNAL life - because he is the BREAD OF LIFE which shall be our eternal supply if we partake of that bread that others, as well as ourselves, may live? Many of the disciples who had followed Jesus thus far, "went back, and walked no more with him" when they discovered that there would be no more loaves and fishes. Jesus turned to his disciples and asked, "Will ye also go away?" And Peter answered, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." God grant that we may not turn back, but that we might follow him for that bread of life which shall evermore satisfy our hunger.