



© 2018 Ginger Hertenstein

SERMON TITLE: "The Food that Endures Forever"

SCRIPTURE: John 6:26-37

DATE: March 11, 2018

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

READ JOHN 6:22-37 and EXODUS 16:13-17, 31

Q C. S. Lewis's book, *The Silver Chair*, Jill caused her friend Eustace Scrubb to fall over a huge cliff, when they were running away from their terrible school. Jill carried with her the burden of having caused Scrubb to fall. It was a heavy burden. She walked and cried, and cried and walked until she finally dropped from exhaustion to figure out what to do. She found that she was terribly thirsty. And that is when she met the Lion at the stream, which you heard.

To drink from the stream, trusting the Lion would not attack her, was the worst thing she ever had to do. But his stern face and voice commanded it.

After she drank, the Lion said, "Come here." She moved close. The Lion asked, "How did your friend fall off like that?" "He was trying to stop me from falling, Sir," she answered. "Why were you so near the edge, Human Child?" She told him, "I was showing off, Sir." "That is a very good answer, Human Child. Do so no more," said the Lion.¹

Some of you may have read this marvelous story of children learning to trust the Lion, Aslan, a representation of Jesus Christ; and how the children were given tasks which took great courage. In the process, they learned not only to follow him, but also to be loyal, faithful friends.

Jill was aware she put her own desires and feelings over and above those of her friend, Scrubb. She was aware of her willfulness in running away from school. She knew she often thought of herself first, without consideration for how her actions affected others. Thus, when she met Aslan, Jill was wary of the Lion. He had piercing eyes which saw right through her and he was very ferocious.

Likewise, we might also be wary of Jesus because we, too, often put our own desires and feelings first, and are simply not sure whether it is safe to follow Him.

In our story, Jesus had miraculously multiplied a few loaves and fish to feed the crowd of 5,000+ and then he and

the disciples left, crossing from one side of the lake to the other. The crowd searched until they found Jesus the next day. They wanted more: more bread, more miracles, more of what Jesus offers. Jesus said this:

"I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval." They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?" Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: *Believe in the one he has sent.*" They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

They truly had not understood the miraculous signs. They had not connected their religious history with what Jesus was doing. So Jesus continued to instruct them:

"I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "Give us that bread every day." Jesus replied, "I AM the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me. However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them." (Jn 6:26-37)

"Don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you." That is Jesus' profound instruction.

So how are we to understand this in 2018? Today, as then, people seek God. Sometimes seekers are unaware of what they are looking for so they embrace many gods, or search for fulfillment in the wrong places, or can't imagine why Jesus is the answer. But if we seek him, Jesus guides us into a new understanding. He asks questions, or points us in a different direction, or through a crisis, reaches out to us, to help us seek more than things here, on earth.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, (New York: Harper Trophy, 2000), chapters one and two.
507

He does this because even though we think we are the ones seeking God, in actuality, God seeks us first. God loves us and wants to give us the food that endures forever.

When the crowd of people had been listening to Jesus, Jesus noticed they were hungry and he fed them. They thought they simply needed a meal. They needed more, just as we do. They needed food for eternal life. But that need created a struggle, like Jill struggled with the Lion.

The struggle is whether to seek Jesus or believe that we are better off following our own ideas and desires and purposes. We tell ourselves silly lies like “it’s my reality,” or “it’s my truth.” It boils down to, “I want what I want.”

The Lion—Jesus—is a little intimidating. He confronts us with questions, like the one he asked Jill: “Why did your friend fall?” She had to admit her sin of “showing off.” But notice, Aslan guided her to admitting the truth so she could receive forgiveness, and also direction. “Good job of admitting that. Don’t do it anymore,” Aslan replied.

That’s true spiritual food. Spiritual food confronts our wrongs and directs us in the right way. True spiritual food feeds our soul:

- Humans do not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God. (Mt 5:14)
- Do not store up treasures on earth but treasures in heaven. (see Mt 6:19-20)
- Follow me, for I am the bread of life. (Jn 6:35)
- Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (see Mt 8:29)

Jesus challenges you by saying “I AM the bread. It is life-building bread. If you are going to the Wednesday night Bible study, you are learning about this and other “I AM” statements of Jesus.

Jesus continually reaches out to people, enters the very essence of our lives with signs of provision, or helping you through difficulties, in order that you respond by faith in him.

Jesus reached out to a man named Ian McCormack. Ian is an avid diver and surfer from New Zealand. He was an atheist, a partier, an unfaithful man who spent his time seeking the next high. Once while diving, he was stung by five deadly box jellyfish. He thought, ‘*what have I done to deserve this?*’ He could feel the poison move through his body and he couldn’t stay awake. He heard a voice say, “Son, if you close your eyes, you will never wake again.”

It took a long time to get help. One taxi driver opened the door and pushed him out on the street because he had

no money. Another refused him help, thinking he was on drugs. Finally someone called an ambulance. On his way to the hospital, Ian’s life went before his eyes. Then he saw a vision of his mother, and she said, ‘Ian pray to God from your heart.’ He wondered, “Which God?” There are thousands. But then, he simply said, “God if you are real, make yourself known now. Help me to pray.”

Words of a prayer he learned as a child became displayed in his mind. “Forgive us our trespasses and sins.” He thought, ‘*How on earth can God forgive me? It’s too late; done too many wrongs; I’m a horrible person.*’ But he prayed for forgiveness. More words came, “Forgive those who have sinned against me.” He saw the faces of the two men who had refused to help him. He couldn’t forgive them. He realized, though, that God was speaking directly to him in that moment. So he said, ‘*God, if you have forgiven me then I can forgive them.*’ More words came, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” ‘*I have never done God’s will; only my will. God if you are real, show me your will and if I live, I will seek to do it.*’ Then, the whole Lord’s Prayer appeared before him and for the first time, he understood what it meant and he prayed for his own “inner man.”

By the time he got to the hospital, he was completely paralyzed. As doctors fought to keep him alive, he suddenly found himself standing in pitch black. The darkness was cold and had an evil presence. He reached for his face, but his body was transparent. Then a strong light shined on him and he was drawn toward the light. He felt incredible love and welcome. He then saw the focal point out of which everything emanated, and the voice which spoke in the ambulance said, “Ian do you wish to return? If you wish to return, you must see in a new light.” He thought *no one loves me; I have no friends, no one.* As he turned, he saw his mother. ‘*If I stay here, she will never know that I gave my heart to the Lord. She will believe I went to hell and it will destroy her.*’ He decided to return. He was sent with this instruction: *If you return you must see things in a new light. You must tell others who won’t go to church I love them.*²

That was thirty years ago. He’s been fed by Jesus ever sense, and he does exactly what Jesus asked, because Jesus fills the hunger he could not find in himself.

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

AMEN

² Ian McCormack, *A Glimpse of Eternity*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59mRZ1Vj8ZU>, accessed March 6, 2018. See also www.aglimpseofeternity.org/