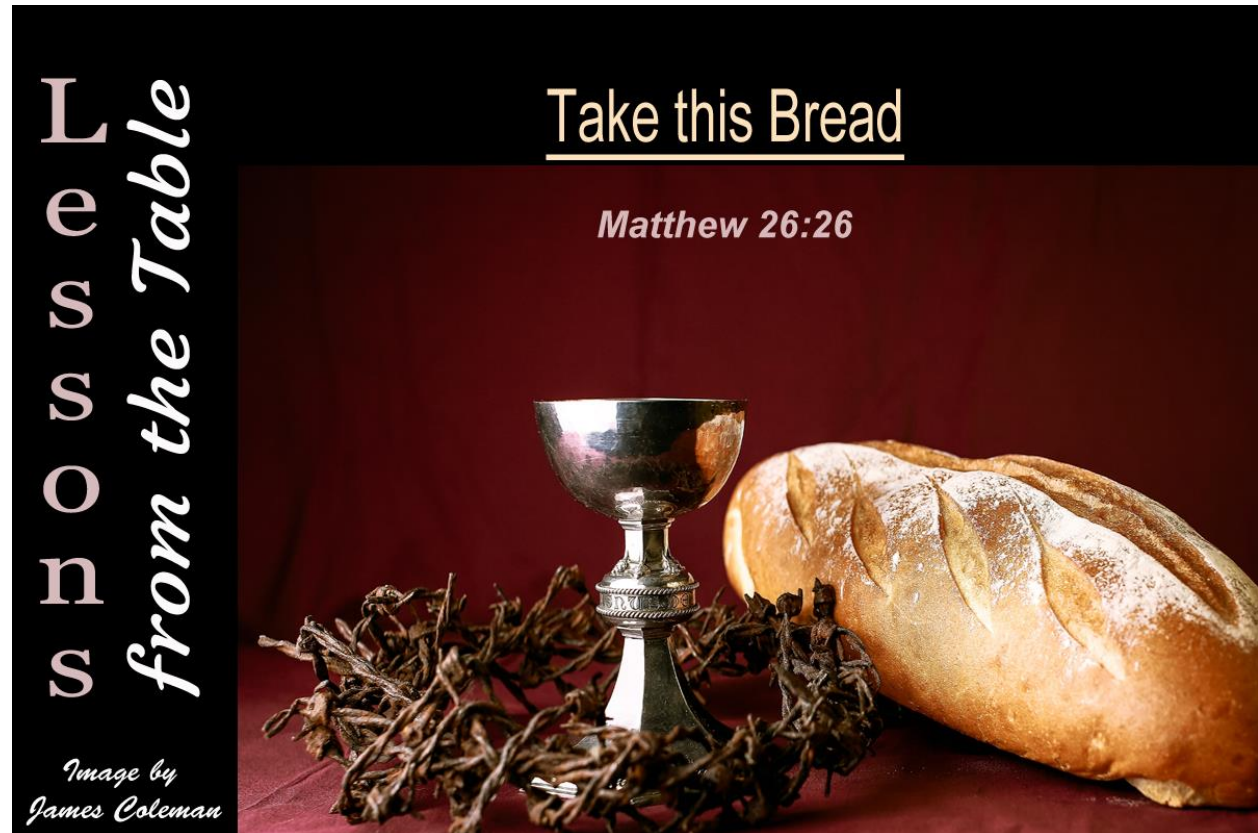


March 14

Take this Bread



Matthew 26:26

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Special Music: "Come to the Table" by Michael Card

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKB9bGtr5rw>

ALL ABOUT BREAD

Flour

**From heads of grain
Pressed to dust
By the grinder's stone
New purpose is born.
White, clean, pure
Captured and held
Ready for the baker's box
And baker's hand.**

Salt

**Formed in the earth
Buried crystals
Of bitterness
Formed by forgotten oceans
And ancient seabeds
Crushed to granules
By mortar and pestle
Giving balance
To all things bland
Flavor for our souls**

Water

**Living, growing, flowing currents
Born of creation
Purified by
By nature's hand
Through mountain streams
Sustenance for all things living
Salvation in a cup
For the thirsty.
Living, dancing, cleansing**

Droplets to quench our thirsty souls

Yeast

Tiny plants

So difficult to see

But created with

A voracious hunger

To consume and grow

Multiply and enrich

Excited by their feast

And their needs to feed

Giving depth to

The baker's creation

Their feast becoming our feast

Bread

Flour, Salt, Water, Yeast

Combined into a doughy clay

Push, pull, pound, stretch, rise

Push, pull, pound, stretch, rise

Push, pull, pound, stretch, rise

Knead and knead again

Bake and serve

Warm and fresh

Savory aroma

that brings us into the moment

Reminding us of

The body of Christ

Given in love

To feed the hunger of our soul

In our quest for God

When I was growing up, Interstate 30 ran right through the middle of downtown in Fort Worth. It was built on a long overhead bridge and when you drove it, you felt almost claustrophobic because the buildings were so close. The neon on the Continental National Bank building and the Mobil Oil building with its Pegasus gave a distinct visual appreciation for the otherwise disparate skyline. Once you got on that I-30 overhead, there was no getting off until you got to the other side of downtown. Coming in from East (Dallas, Arlington, and Grand Prairie), you always knew when you were about to ascend onto that bridge because, on the south side of the interstate was Mrs. Baird's Bakery. For me, when that aroma of the bakery hit my nose, I knew we were getting close to home. That wonderful smell of fresh baked bread was intoxicating. People just can not help but love the smell of fresh baked bread, even if you don't eat bread. That bread factory was a moniker for the city of Fort Worth for so very many years.

Eventually, to everyone's disappointment, Mrs. Baird's move their facility and the factory became a haunted house. I-30 was rerouted out of downtown because the traffic had become so congested, and the city planning commission could not find a way to expand the overhead to meet the growing population. I miss that smell of fresh bread. It was like a breath of fresh air. Long-time residents of Fort Worth still talk about that bread factory and what a delight it was to experience that fragrance coming into downtown.

Bread making is almost as old as man. Early man would make a gruel from grains and water and it was just a short simple step to pour that gruel on hot rocks to fry it. Bread and water became a standard at every meal and if you stopped in at a neighbor's home, there was always bread to be had. It was a staple in every household. Today, bread is the most widely consumed food in the world. From rich to poor, it is a basic part of most every meal. For the hungry, it is a way to stay alive and for the well-fed, it is a thing to be savored in all forms.

During the depression here in the US, a common treat for kids was a slice of bread with a little sugar. When we talk about family, so many expressions have risen from having bread in the household.

Constructing houses is how he makes his bread and butter

He knows on which side of his bread is the butter.

Money = Bread

The greatest thing since sliced bread

Taking bread out of people's mouths

Half a loaf is better than none

He is living on bread and water

And on top of these expressions are a multitude of biblical references.

Ecclesiastes 11:1

Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. (Meaning “Give generously today and expect no reward and the bread that you cast will return to you many fold.”)

John 6:45

Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 6:33

“For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Luke 11:3

“Give us each day our daily bread.”

And so many, many more. We think of the mana that God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, as a type of bread. Bread is the go to object on the table, when we reference a meal. We “break bread together.” When we share with others, we talk about sharing our bread.

When we break down the components of bread, as broad as our references are, we find that basic bread consists of very little. Flour, salt, water, and yeast. And yes, the yeast can be left out. When the Bible references unleavened bread, it is a

reference to leaving the yeast out of the dough, which makes for a flat bread that is usually pretty dense.

There are times in the Old Testament where the Jews were expected to eat unleavened bread. As far as how it became a staple for the Seder at Passover, when God called Moses to lead his children out of Egypt and the Pharaoh had agreed to let them go after all the calamity that had ensued, the people were instructed to make bread without yeast because they needed to leave quickly. When yeast is added to the dough, it needs time to rise. Time that the Israelites did not have in the rush to pack and begin the Exodus. The Seder meal that occurs on the first night of Passover includes unleavened bread as a reminder of that time when the Jews rushed to leave Egypt.

As we come together in community to celebrate the Lord's Supper, we note every time that we celebrate it, we reference the words of Jesus:

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Why does Jesus use the allegory of bread to talk about His body? Why doesn't He use something like lamb? After all, doesn't the bible refer to Him as the Lamb

of God? Have we been doing this celebration at the table for so long that we do not find it curious as to why Jesus chose bread? Even if it had been a Passover meal, there would have been a lamb bone available. Have we become so jaded to our routine that we just take what Jesus says and run with it even though we do not understand it?

Everything that Jesus did had intent. Most of those intents were to teach. Our Lord knew that we were capable of understanding. He also knew that we, as humans, have a tendency to overthink things and make them more complicated than they need to be. This whole dinner was the most intense teaching moment of His ministry. This was His last chance before going to the cross to get them to understand what He had been trying to teach them for three years. He needed them to understand, as much as possible, that what was about to happen was necessary for the salvation of God's greatest creation. And he did not want them to ever forget this moment. He also did not want those who came after them to forget that moment. This table was set for that moment and for posterity, to be celebrated in community.

It is my belief, that in order to accomplish this, Jesus kept it simple. It is akin to thinking about colors. When we see the color green, we naturally think green, something that has been drilled into us since childhood. We call the color green because it is the simplest way of describing it. We could also call it "blue and

yellow mixed together.” We could also get into the proportions that are used to determine the shades of green. But, generally speaking, if someone uses the color green in a sentence, we know what they are talking about. We don’t have to say blue and yellow mixed together. Green is sufficient.

“See this bread? It is my body. When you eat this bread, remember me, beaten and broken. That is about to happen to me, and I don’t want you to ever forget what is about to happen. I am giving you something simple to remember this night. Take and eat this common, readily available bread. Break it. Eat it. Remember.” There is nothing complex about that.

The bread, made from simple ingredients (flour, salt, water and, yeast), served at communion, is meant to remind us all that the message of Christ is simple.

Man’s relationship to God was never meant to be complex. Have you ever gone walking with a friend? A walk where you do not need to say anything to one another? A walk where you just revel in the relationship? A walk where you experience an unspoken bond that is created just by taking that walk with someone you trust. That is the kind of relationship that God is wanting with us. When we make the relationship complex, we lose sight of that.

Christ's body was beaten and broken so that we could experience that relationship. Christ went to the cross willingly, so that we could experience that relationship. And He did not do it for just us. He also did it for His Father. He came to mend that relationship. To build a bridge between us and the Father. To show us how simple it really is.

While He was here with us on this earth, he proclaimed a simple message.

Love the Lord your God with your heart, mind and soul

Love your neighbor as yourself

Love you enemies

Forgive those who persecute you

Take care of those in need

Provide comfort for those in grief

Give of yourself the way that Christ has given for you.

When we come to The Lord's Table and join in community with each other and with our heavenly Father, we need to remember that being able to do so was so very costly. And yet, it is offered freely. The perfect example of how much God loves and cares for us.

Take this bread... and remember.

AMEN

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