

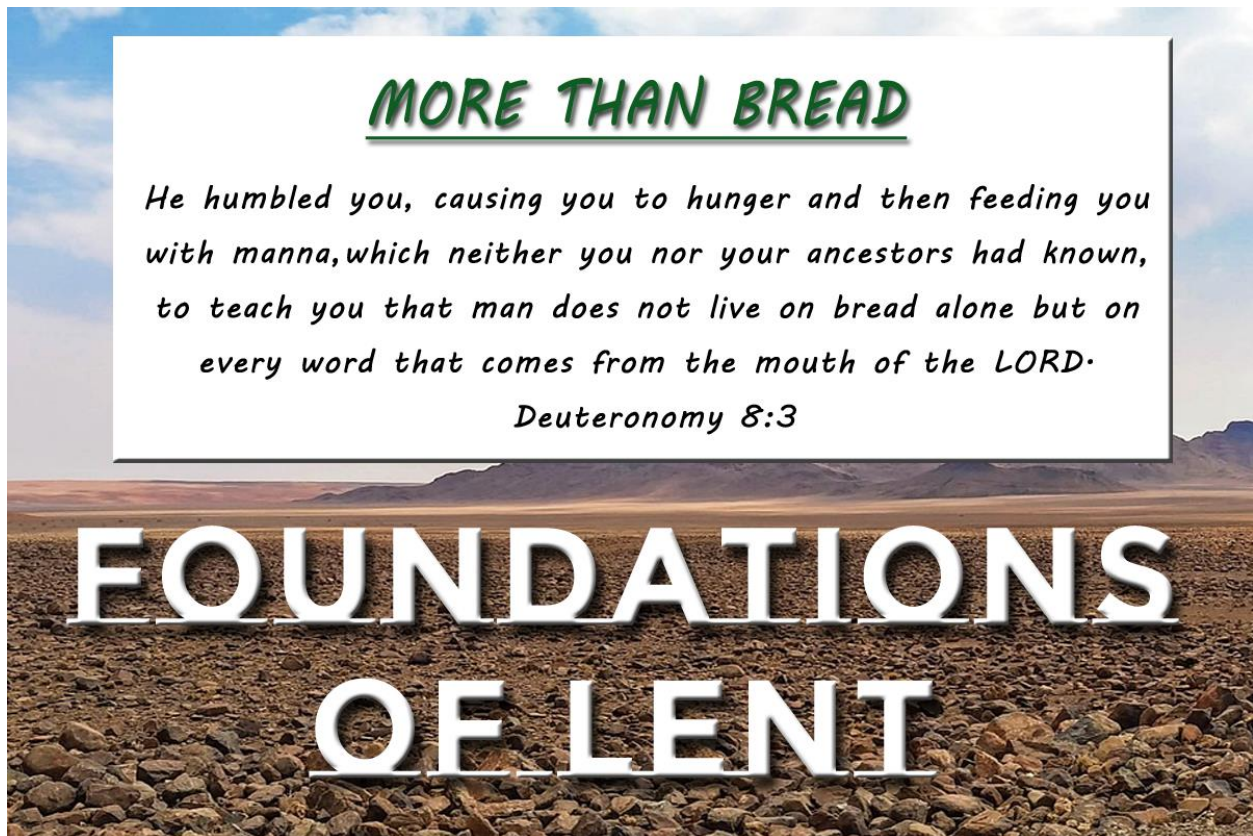
March 12

“MORE THAN BREAD”

Deuteronomy 8:3

Possible Video at the beginning: Bread: More Than A Metaphor | Jon Jorgenson
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xgl22riRLO0>

Special Music: “Man Shall Not Live by Bread Alone” Michael Lining
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ2BrmFYBlc>



Deuteronomy 8:3

- 1 He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

BREAD OF HEAVEN

Like God's children
Wandering in the sand
I cry out for bread,
Delusions of comprehension
Dreams of Death in my head.
My over-rated, understated prayers
Flung to the stars,
Missing their mark
Because I have forgotten
That the Creation is not the Creator.
That the universe is not my God.
It is a golden calf
Despite my worship,
Incapable of response.
Instead, it is my tormenter
Leaving my belly
Craving for sustenance.
Blocks of rocks
Are not bread.
Nor should I ask them be.

**A gentle whisper of wind
Calls to me
From the halls of heaven itself.
The words spoken in the night
Are the voice of my Creator
Reaching out to me
Begging me to open my ears
And drop all my fears.
“Turn to me, child, and I will give you rest.
Turn back to me, child and I will do what’s best
For you.
You are not alone
And in your confusion and delusion
You should turn to me,
Allow me to meet your needs.
For my words are your sustenance,
And my blood your redemption.”**

Thought for the day. When satan offers Christ his temptations in the desert, and Jesus answers with scripture, why is it that none of the scriptures that He uses are from the Ten Commandments delivered by Moses to the People of Israel? Think about it. All of the Jewish laws, all 613 of them can be viewed through the lens of the Ten Commandments, but Jesus chooses to reply with three verses that are not really a part of that spiritual legal system, although the Number 1 commandment is “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength,” which is similar to our scripture today. So why didn’t Jesus use Deuteronomy 6:5? Why choose instead Deuteronomy 8:3, reminding satan of the time the Jews were in the desert and God provided them with Mana as sustenance? What is the significance of His choice? Jesus is very deliberative in His response.

So often, I feel like a toddler running around the feet of Jesus saying, “Why did you say this? What does that mean? How did you do that? Do you still love me?” I know that you yourselves have each been around toddlers that have done the same thing. “Why is the sky blue? Where does the rainbow get all of its colors? How big do elephants get? Do you still love me?”

I stand in total amazement that God never gets irritated at me for asking questions. He never tells me to go away and play in another room. He may not answer all my questions, but He is patient and shows me so much grace. I wish I could have been that kind of parent, myself. Sometimes, it takes getting older to realize where you have made your mistakes. Of course, you can’t undo the damage, but you can start from where you are and try to do better. Maybe I will

never have the patience of Jesus, but I'd like to think that the patience of Job is a possibility.

Back to our question, why does Jesus quote Deuteronomy 8:5 rather than the first commandment? Even in the New Testament, the First Commandment is the Greatest Commandment. My favorite scripture in the Bible is Matthew 22:37-39.

Jesus said unto him, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. (a reference to the first commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5) **'And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** (a reference to Leviticus 19:18).

I realize that neither the First Commandment nor the passage in Matthew talk about bread. But is this first temptation really about Jesus' ability or desire to turn stone into bread, or is it about keeping our priorities straight, even in the most desperate of times?

God reminds us throughout the Old Testament that we are a "stiff necked people," stubborn to the point of selfishness, given to faith until we become challenged, and the path gets bumpy. When things go wrong, or at least we think they have gone wrong, we immediately start thinking that God is letting things slip through His fingers and that suddenly God is no longer in control. That never happens. That is just how we observe things because, well, to be honest with you, we don't really trust Him like we should. We can always do better. We

look at all the spinning galaxies in space and billions of people on earth, whirling in disorganized chaos, and we lose faith that anything or anyone could keep it all under control. Chaos becomes a new reality for us. We keep our hands out and our heads down in case we need to catch ourselves when we think we are falling. We are prone to sticking our toe in the water before jumping in. It is so very difficult to remember that **“All things work together for the good of those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.”** That is not just a catchy life phrase. It’s an anointed truth, bathed in the blood of Jesus Christ and washed over our heads, a truth that cannot be extinguished.

So, here is Jesus in the desert. He hasn’t eaten for forty days. He has to be famished. After all, that body of His is human. And satan pops in and says, ‘Hey, I know you must be hungry. I can hear your stomach growling. You don’t really have to do this to yourself. You know you can just turn these stones into bread, right? I mean, you turned the water into wine at that wedding. This shouldn’t be any more difficult for you and you will feel so much better when you get a little food in you. And besides that, you do realize that the Creator doesn’t really love you. I mean, come on, what kind of Father would let His son starve to death in the desert. Forget about Him and take matters into your own hands. You got this.’”

And Jesus replies “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

And when he replies, He is quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3,

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Moses is speaking to the Israelites to teach them about the reasons God has for giving them the mana. He gives them these words which Jesus will use again when satan tempts him about the bread, words that every Jewish boy would learn in temple. And when Moses uses the words, he gives them a context that is important to Jesus at this time of testing during His own time in the wilderness. When first spoken, Moses is leading the children of Israel through the desert. When they first enter the desert, they probably felt that they had enough food and water to get to where they were going even though they left Egypt in a hurry.

And then they messed up. While Moses was on the mountain preparing the laws and instructions for the people, the people lost their patience, decided that it was taking far too long, and that Moses wasn't coming back. Their answer was to build a new God. One that they could see and touch. One made out of gold, shaped like a calf. God saw them do it and sent Moses back down the mountain. Moses was so angry at what he found, he threw the stone tablets down and broke them into pieces.

We see this problem still today. People put their faith in their leader, not their God. So, when the leader fails to meet their expectations, they feel lost and try to grab onto something new. Sometimes it's a new leader. Sometimes it's a

new God. Either way, doing so just proves that we are a fickle and stiff-necked people. Either God and our leaders work the way we want them to, or we will just dump them for someone new. That's because we have a real tendency to take God our answers instead of our questions. Why aren't the Israelites asking God for food because they are hungry? Instead, they are demanding a new God.

As disappointed as God is, he still provides for them. He gives them something new. Something they have never had before. Something no one has had before. And it is measured out every day to meet each of their needs. They can consume as much as they want. What they don't consume becomes rotten and disappears back into the desert. But the following morning, the process repeats itself. Mana from heaven, with all the nutrients in it, to enable them to survive in the desert.

The way to look at this is that God provides. He provided mana for the Israelites in the wilderness, and he had a different solution for Jesus in the desert. We may not know how this was accomplished, but God did it His way, in His time, with His son. Getting involved in the details of how just puts us in the same loop we wind up in when we ask questions like, "How could God create a universe out of nothing?," "How did God create life?," and "Why does God love us so much?" That last one gets me every time. Why did He love and provide for the Israelites after they turned they turned their back on Him? Why did He go through all the effort of creating this new mana thing?

In the back of our minds, we really don't believe God truly understands our needs. As I told you earlier, what we think we need and what God knows we need

may be two totally different things, but that is because we often pray for our solutions, rather than giving God our problem.

For instance. Let's say we have a new job at a grocery store. But a week after we start the new job our truck breaks down and we need find a way to get to work so we don't lose our jobs. Most of us pray asking God for a new vehicle. But the vehicle is not the problem, it's what we think is the problem. The actual problem is that we don't have a way to get to work. The prayer that makes sense to God is when we lay our cards on the table and say, "Father, I need a solution to my dilemma. I need to find a way to get to work and back so that I don't lose my job. I ask you to help me with that." Now the solution that comes with this kind of prayer may not be the one we are looking for. But it is God's solution for the problem, and it comes with a lesson to be learned. Perhaps a friend has a bike that they don't need any more and they are willing to loan it to us. Maybe a fellow employee at work has the same schedule that we do and is willing to give us a ride every day. However, God solves our problem always comes with new opportunities. Maybe that friend with the bike was trying to make room in their house for a new bassinet. Maybe that fellow employee has never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Jesus is opening a door for you to be able to share with them.

I guess the point of what I am saying here is that we should never count God out because the answer to our prayers doesn't meet our vision. But remember, it's not about us. It's about Jesus.

So, I ask again, why is it a problem for Jesus to turn the stones to bread? We know He can do it. We know He's hungry. Why is satan so wrong in His assessment of what is going on here?

Because, it's not God's answer to the problem.

It might work. But is not God's answer to the problem. And trust me, satan always has something to gain by us finding our own solution rather than looking to God for the right answer.

And why does Jesus want God's answer, when satan's answer is more immediate? It's in our scripture today:

man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Jesus could have turned the stones to bread, but there is so much more here than some bread that will fill an empty stomach. In order to truly live the way God intends, we have to make His words an intricate, woven pattern in our lives. We have to write those words on our hearts, just like Jesus did so that we have them at the ready when temptation presents itself. Not to impress satan, but to allow the word of God to protect us.

We need to write 1 John 1:9 on our hearts: **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."**

We need to write John 3:16-17 on our hearts: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

And yes, we need to write today’s words on our hearts, “man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”

This week, I would like to for each of us to ponder these words that we have heard today. Perhaps doing so will make us better practitioners of powerful prayer, where we release our problems into the arms of Almighty God without providing Him with our human solutions. Perhaps we will be able to focus on discerning God’s solutions for us rather than our own. Perhaps we will be better able to accept God’s blessings and lessons as He provides for our needs.

God bless you all,

AMEN

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