

## “Broken Bread”

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It's said that in some cultures a meal isn't a meal unless there's rice. For three meals a day, rice is served with whatever else is being eaten. In the western world, there was a time when the same thing could be said about bread. A meal wasn't really a meal unless there was bread on the table. Bread was as standard as water glasses and salt and pepper shakers.

But eating habits have shifted, and bread may not be as big a thing at American meals as it once was, but bread's still important. It's often said that bread is the staple of life and necessary for living. And that's why when we pray for daily bread we know that what we're really asking for is everything that we need for life to continue.

While the Holy Land is officially part of what we call the Middle East, when it comes to the bread or rice question, the eating habits there are definitely Western. They eat bread, and the bread they eat is much the same as it has been for centuries.

Since bread was the staple of life, it appears frequently in the pages of the Bible. When God delivered the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and took them to the Promised Land, the people complained about not having anything to eat. So, He provided manna to fall each night so the people could gather it to make bread for each day.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem which is Hebrew for “House of Bread.” Before He began His ministry, Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert to make bread from the stones around Him. Jesus twice fed huge crowds with a generous amount of bread.

In the world of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, “*breaking bread*” meant that it was a time to eat. Because loaves were big, something had to be done to make them manageable to eat. So bread was torn or broken into sizes that could be easily handled. A meal began with the breaking of bread and then the sharing of food would follow. Breaking of bread also meant a time to fellowship.

We continue to break bread in our own lives every day. But, in our world of soft loaves and sliced bread, breaking bread is purely symbolic. We have to eat, and we do. Each day we seem to hear again and again about the epidemic of obesity and few of us would be foolish enough to argue that overeating is a problem.

Some people have trouble with food, whether eating too much, too little, or using food for the wrong sorts of things. Misusing food like that is more than a medical or emotional issue; it's a sin. It's not an exaggeration to suggest that every sin is actually the sin of gluttony! Gluttony is the inability or unwillingness to control desire.

It's the failure to receive God's blessings with a sense of responsibility. It's about answering a craving and feeding a hunger. Go back to the Garden of Eden with me. We don't know what Adam and Eve had for food that day, but the devil got them to crave something they didn't have, and they did what they had to do to satisfy that craving. They ate what was forbidden. They indulged their craving. They fed their desire. They sinned.

We do the same thing. We see what we want, and we reach out and take what we want even ignoring the clear command to not to. We don't care. We want what we want, and we take it! Be it the big TV, the new car, the better house, or the nice vacation.

Indulging our desires is a persistent problem for all of us. You see it, you want it, you take it, and you pay the price. How often are you led from the simple trust in God and His promises always to provide? We don't handle the bread of life very well.

Broken bread reflects our own internal brokenness and failures.

God provides spiritual bread that meets the greatest need of all. God gives you Jesus. Look at John 6. Here, Jesus delivers a hard message if not one of His hardest messages. Look at verses 54-56, *“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”*

Jesus was saying that He was the only way a person could ever hope to live and thrive in this life and in the next. Jesus was saying that He is the Bread of Life. You must feed on Jesus to grow as His child, and not eat the bread of your cravings, but the living bread of Jesus who gives life!

But before you can eat the bread of life from heaven, the bread must be broken. And that’s precisely what happened in a graphic way on the cross on Calvary. On the cross, the living bread from heaven was broken for you. Jesus’ blood was shed and His body broken in His beatings. The breaking of Himself paid for sin. The breaking gives you life!

Every time you hear the words of forgiveness spoken, you eat the broken bread of life. Every time you receive the Sacrament, you eat the bread of life broken for you. Physical bread is broken and Jesus, the bread of life, is present. You eat and drink, and in so doing receive the greatest gift: the bread of life, here and now!

This doesn’t mean though that all of your desires and cravings will simply vanish. It doesn’t mean that once you start eating the living bread of heaven, your desires will never get the best of you or lead you into trouble. We still sin and are in need of Jesus Christ.

What it does mean is that when you receive the living bread of Jesus, your sin is forgiven. Your cravings don’t drive you, He does. Your life becomes ordered His way. Your trust increases. In other words, everything changes. This is the shape of the Christian life.

Daily receive the gifts God gives to sustain and enrich your life. Daily enjoy feeding on Jesus, as you’re in His Word and prayer, receiving His broken bread for your forgiveness and strength.

The Bread of Life was broken for you, and that makes you entirely new. The bread’s been broken! Eat up! His blessings are waiting for you!