



Catalog No. 861

John 6:21-40

Thirteenth Message

Gary Vanderet

June 21, 1992

## THE SECRET OF SATISFACTION AND SECURITY

*SERIES: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE*

On this Father's Day I would like to share with you a letter that came across my desk several months ago. This father, as you will hear, was well on his way to burn-out. He wrote:

The reason I'm writing is that the Lord has blessed us so much, and I should be full of joy, but I have been depressed for about ten months now. I don't know whether to turn to a pastor, a physician, a psychologist, a nutritionist or a chiropractor. Last September, the Lord blessed us with a beautiful baby boy. He is just wonderful! But he's been very demanding. Last semester Margie was taking classes three nights a week to finish her B.A. degree, and I took care of little Danny. He cried and sobbed the whole time we were together. I got very tired and began to have a great deal of trouble getting up in the morning for work. I started getting sick very easily. I have not been able to cope with these things. Margie and I hardly ever get to be together. This has been going on for 11 months now. There are a couple of other things that probably contribute to my depression. They are 1) responsibilities at work. We are shorthanded and I'm trying to do too much. 2) Spending too many weekends doing yard work and trying to fix up our fixer-upper house. 3) Our finances, which are very limited. We have all the things we could ever dream of at our age (27), our own neat little house in a good neighborhood, a job I consider a ministry. We have a fine healthy boy, each other, and most of all, our life in Christ. I have no reason to be depressed and tired all the time. If you have any insights as to what I should do, please let me know.

Can you identify with this man? I can. Here is a young father headed for burn-out. Some would say he's there already. The surprising thing is, he seems bewildered by it. A glance at his schedule, however, reveals why his mind and body are rebelling.

A common mistake young families make, especially in this area, is that they attempt to accomplish too much too soon. We want it all, and we want it right now. So we spend our young parenting years in a continuous state of fatigue and stress. We crowd our days with unnecessary responsibilities and commitments that will have no lasting benefit. Let's look together at the words of Jesus, from chapter 6 of John's gospel, to see what the master Teacher has to say about these matters. His words are a good reminder to us, especially on Father's Day.

John 6: 22-70 is a follow-up discussion on the lesson of the loaves, which we looked at last week. Once again in this gospel we have a miracle, a sign, followed by a discourse that reveals the inner meaning of the miracle. Here Jesus takes the people whom he has fed, to the heart of the claim that his actions embody. He forces them to look at what the miracle means. Feeding the five thousand was not merely meant to be a free meal. It was, in fact, Jesus' claim to be the ultimate nourisher of the human heart.

You will notice as I read, however, that this passage is not really a discourse; it is a dialogue. Jesus is responding to questions and answers. There are four groups involved in this dialogue: 1) the crowd ( verses 25-40); 2) the Jews (41-59); 3) the disciples (60-66); and 4) the twelve disciples, with Peter as their spokesman (61-71). We will cover verses 22 through 40 this morning, and leave the remaining verses for next week.

Verses 22-24 give the setting for the words of Jesus.

**The next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but [that] His disciples had gone away alone. There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.**

Remember Jesus fed the crowd, dismissed them, and sent the twelve disciples back to Capernaum by boat. Then in the early morning hours he came to the twelve in the midst of the storm at sea. When the crowd awoke the next morning they came looking for breakfast, but Jesus was nowhere to be seen. They decided to go looking for him. They thought he might have gone to Capernaum, so a number of them commandeered or chartered a number of small fishing boats that had blown across the sea in the storm, and they rowed across to Capernaum.

**And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"**

The real question they are asking, of course, is, "Where did you go? What happened to you? We were all waiting for you over on the other side. Where's breakfast?"

**Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, [even] God, has set His seal."**

Jesus ignores their questions about when and how he got there and proceeds to tell them why they really came to seek him. Notice that he says there are two kinds of bread in the world: that which lasts and that which does not. It is far better, he concludes, to work for the bread that endures. But the problem with most of us is that we are working for the kind that doesn't last—mere bread, bread that tempo-

rarily fills us but eventually leaves us unsatisfied again. The problem, according to Jesus, is not that we work for bread, because we all have to earn a living in order to eat. But that bread doesn't last very long. In the end does not satisfy, so it is a bad investment.

Jesus' words reveal a major flaw in our lifestyle. Many of us spend all of our energy working for mere bread only to discover that it doesn't satisfy. When we're young, all we can think about is a "hot" car (for some, that urge never leaves), or a strong and healthy body, whatever. As we get older these desires change to a striving to be economically sufficient, to have that perfect house or some trinket that will make life more satisfying.

Many feel that the most important things in life are to be healthy and strong, and economically sufficient. That is what life is about, and that is why we work, isn't it? The candidates in the upcoming Presidential election are being evaluated, not on their integrity or character, or on what they propose to do about improving the moral climate of our country, but on what they will do about the economy. Why is that? It is because the bottom line for most is, what is going to happen to their standard of living. The philosophy of many (including some Christians) can be described in these words,

Into this world to eat and to sleep,  
And to know no reason why he was born,  
Save to consume the corn,  
Devour the cattle, flock and fish,  
And leave behind and empty dish.

Jesus challenges that philosophy. His words force us to ask ourselves, "What are we working for?" Is everything we do during the week merely preparation for the weekend? This is how most people live, isn't it? What makes us different from animals, however, is that having a full belly and a comfortable place to sleep does not satisfy us. Jesus' point is, it is unwise an investment to put all your energy into what will not pay off.

Years ago, I used to watch the Jack Benny show on television. I remember a dialogue that took place now and then between Jack and his servant Rochester. Jack had a vault where he kept all his money, and when he opened it (you couldn't see it but you could hear all the locks and chains being opened), Rochester would say, "But Mr. Benny, you can't take it with you!" Jack would reply, "Then I'm not going!" But he was wrong, of course. We are all going—and the hearse will not be towing any U-Haul trailers. We will leave everything behind for someone else.

Secondly, notice that only the Son of Man (Jesus' title for himself) can give the bread that lasts and gives life. And the Father has authorized him to give it: "on Him the Father, [even] God, has set His seal." No one else is given permission to grant life: not Buddha, not Sun Myung Moon, not Joseph Smith, not Mary Baker Eddy; no one but Jesus. So if you want life, go for the bread that lasts and go to Jesus to get it.

**They said therefore to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"**

The crowd misunderstands Jesus' exhortation that they not work for food that perishes. He wasn't focusing on the nature of work, but on what is and isn't an appropriate goal. But they focus all their attention on work. They say, in effect, "Tell us the works that God requires and we will do them." They have no doubt about their intrinsic ability to meet any challenge God may set before them. "What do I need to do to make God happy?" is what they are asking. There are completely insensitive to the fact that salvation is first and foremost a gift—and it is a gift that is within the purview of the Son of Man who is standing before them.

**Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."**

Jesus sets them straight. The work that God requires is faith. And it is not faith in the abstract—some existential truth without a coherent object. Rather, they must believe in *the one whom God has sent*. We have already seen in this book that Jesus is supremely the one who reveals God to us. Why is that? It is because, unlike any other person, he has been in the courts of heaven, and he has been sent from there that the world may be saved through him. So the way to get this life-giving bread is to believe in Jesus himself.

**They said therefore to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"**

In light of the fact that Jesus has just fed the multitude, isn't this statement terribly ironic? Incredibly, they were not impressed. They are saying, in effect, "You fed five thousand people in one meal. So what? Moses fed two and a half million people for forty years. Let's see you top that." They believed that it was actually Moses who generated the manna and fed the people. (The rabbis taught that the bread ceased because Moses had died.) They held that the bread from heaven was all Moses' doing: "*He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.*"

**Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."**

Jesus is saying, in effect, "You are wrong on two counts. First, it wasn't Moses who fed you, it was the Father." (The *He* in the quotation refers to God, not to Moses.) "Secondly, that manna was only a symbol of the 'true' bread which was to come down from heaven. The real manna is 'that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.'" "That manna in the wilderness," Jesus is saying, "was only a shadow of the true bread. It was a symbol, a picture of it. The real bread from heaven is me! I came down from heaven, sent of the Father, to feed the restless hunger of the masses for meaning, fulfillment, satisfaction, excitement and glory in their lives."

**They said therefore to Him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the**

Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Some very important truths are revealed in these wonderful, gracious words.

Notice, first, Jesus' recognition of the universal hunger for satisfaction beyond physical food. The crowd says, "Lord, give us this bread always." Their reply reminds us of the woman at the well who asked Jesus for "living water." It reveals humanity's hunger for life. I find it to be true wherever I go that people are hungry for more than a full stomach and a comfortable home. There is a restlessness about us that cries for more. The crowd does not understand what it is they really wanted.

I am in the midst of counseling a man, an unbeliever, who has spent all of life his life striving after things. For the past twelve years he has been working to "meet the needs" of his family, he feels, but he has actually been neglecting them. Three months ago, his wife and children left him, and his world collapsed. He has become acutely aware that he has wasted his life looking for things that did not satisfy. Satisfaction for him was always just one appointment, just one day, just one week away. Even last week, all that was on his mind was how much he could get for himself in the divorce settlement. But he has lost his wife and children. He is reaping a whirlwind. He knows there is more to life than all this, but he is unwilling to give up the little he has left in order to gain it.

Secondly, notice that Jesus claims to be the answer to that universal hunger: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." The hungry and thirsty person who comes to Jesus finds his hunger satisfied and his thirst quenched. Jesus is the giver and the sustainer of life. That is his claim. He is the secret to satisfaction and security. He is the promise that the law can never fill. He is the fulfiller of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

**"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;  
And you who have no money, come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without  
cost.**

**Why spend money on what is not bread,  
And your labor on what does not satisfy?  
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,  
And your soul will delight in the richest of fare."  
(Isaiah 55:1-2)**

Jesus makes an unequivocal promise: Those who come to him will never, by any means (this is the strongest negative possible in Greek) hunger or thirst. He satisfies fully. Revelation 7 tells us that the consummating satiation will occur when "those have washed their robes...in the blood of the Lamb" stand before the throne of God and experience the oracle: "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat..." (Rev. 7:16).

Thirdly, Jesus elaborates on what it means to "come and believe." Here he says a number of important things about what we might call the mystery of conversion.

Notice that anyone can come. No one is too far out or too far gone. We will never out-sin the grace of God. Anyone can come. My friend Dave Roper tells a story about a woman named Edith Richardson who as a little girl felt that she was too great a sinner to come to Jesus. But once in church she heard her pastor read from the King James version of the Scriptures the words, "Jesus receiveth sinners and *eateth* with them." She thought he said Edith, and that was all she needed to hear. Maybe that's what you need to hear this morning as well: Jesus receives sinners, sinners like Barbara, John, Charlie, Susan, "and eateth with them." No matter what your record, no matter what you have done, where you have been, no matter how proud, arrogant and self-sufficient you have been, when you come you will be welcomed. Jesus promises, "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

Notice also, that once you have come to Jesus you are safe. No one gets lost. That is because your security is not found in your hanging on to him, but in his hanging on to you. Some of you remember Paul Winslow, who was a pastor here for many years and now serves in a ministry in Spokane, Washington. There were many qualities I admired in Paul, and several of them revolved around his fathering skills. He always pushed his children to the limits. Once when his oldest son Todd was little, he encouraged him to walk across a log over a swollen Sierra stream. "Hold my hand," Paul told him. Todd hung on as tightly as he could—his little knuckles were white—but he went, knowing that his safety lay not in his strong grip on his father's hand, but because his father was holding on to him. In the same way, that is our security as well: our Father's hand is holding on to us. Our security is not found in how well we perform, in how many good things we are doing for God, in how much we love our wives and children. Our security is found in knowing that God is holding on to our hand.

And all who come to him are forever safe because it is the Father's work that causes us to come: "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." This is a great and comforting word to me as I preach. Your response is not dependent upon my ability to put words together in a way that will move you. If God is at work, people will respond. The Spirit leads us, the Father draws us, and he keeps us as well.

So Jesus summarizes in verse 40: "that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." What wonderful, reassuring words these are!

And so we close this morning with the Lord's question addressed to every one us, "What are you working for?" Why are you going to work tomorrow? Is it merely to earn a living, to pay the mortgage, to buy a new car? If those are our only reasons, we will miss out on the richness that God wants for us. There will be people around you at work tomorrow who have never tasted of that bread who is Jesus. They are just as hungry for life as you are, and the Father wants to feed them too. There is so much more to life than earning a paycheck. Being involved with the Living God, in his kingdom and his purposes, is life indeed. Clara Tear Williams has put it this way:

All my life long I have panted for a drink from some  
clear spring  
That I hoped would quench the burning thirst I felt with-  
in.  
Hallelujah! I have found Him for whom my soul has long  
craved!  
Jesus satisfies my longings—through His blood I now am  
saved.

Feeding on the husks around me till my strength was al-  
most gone,  
Longed my soul for something better, only still to hunger  
on.  
Hallelujah! I have found Him for whom my soul has long  
craved!  
Jesus satisfies my longings—through His blood I now am  
saved.

Well of water ever springing, Bread of life, so rich and  
free,  
Untold wealth that never faileth, my Redeemer is to me.  
Hallelujah! I have found Him for whom my soul has long  
craved!  
Jesus satisfies my longings—through His blood I now am  
saved.

Here is the cure to the dilemma our young friend shared  
in his letter. Jesus is the only true source of security and sat-  
isfaction. Let us ask our living Lord to train our spiritual  
palates, to teach us that he is our daily bread, and indeed all  
the bread that we will ever need.

*© 1992 Peninsula Bible Church/Cupertino.*