**Feeding the Good Ground**

John 6:26,27 NKJV

*Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."*

The magnitude and significance of Jesus feeding about 5000 men with only five loaves of bread and two small fish was not lost on the gospel writers. Besides Jesus' greatest miracle of raising Himself from the dead, the feeding of the 5000 is the only other miracle written about in all four gospels. There must be some sort of importance behind it, right? Indeed. The day after this miracle Jesus reveals not only what He can do but who He is through seven "I am" statements: *"I am the bread of life"* (John 6:35).

"I am" is a significant phrase throughout John's gospel. If you research the two words / and *am* together in the New Testament (NKJV), you will get 19 "hits" in Matthew, 10 in Mark, and 21 in Luke. However, in John's gospel, you will get 66 "hits" for *I am*. This is more than all the other three gospels combined! This is even more significant when you realize that John's whole point throughout his gospel is to prove, without a shadow of doubt, that Jesus is God in the flesh. By this, John connects Jesus to God by using the same name He is to be called when speaking to Pharoah: I AM. (Read Exodus 3:1-4:17.) The people are in the very presence of God, yet do not understand that...

The day after Jesus performs this great miracle, the people wait for Him on the shore, but to their disappointment, Jesus is not in the boat with His disciples. They search for Him until they find Him. Jesus knows they are only seeking Him because they are hungry again. So, He addresses a more important issue: their spiritual hunger. *Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him*" (John 6:26,27). Even after seeing a great miracle the day before, the crowd wants to see another sign (vs 30). They even try to manipulate Him by comparing Him to Moses: *Our fathers ate the manna in the desert as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat"* (vs 31). They still do not understand...

Good ground knows *what* Jesus can do for their life because they know *who* He is for their life. The bread of heaven (Jesus) came down from heaven and gave life to all the world. But for those "who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28), He gives the proper nourishment to sustain our spirit. He gives us hope of eternal life. He gives us eyes to see the victory in any situation no matter how bleak it might look. He gives us wisdom from above. He gives us comfort when all seems lost. Yet sometimes we are like the crowd, simply waiting for the next miracle that might show up in our life. Sometimes, we forget too soon the miracle Jesus did for us the day before. And like the crowd, we stand confused, seeking another sign...

The crowd seeking for Jesus is confused because they do not understand how Jesus can be bread from heaven. Moreover, they do not understand how Jesus can ask them to eat of His flesh: Then Jesus said to them, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him"* (John 6:53-56). Of course, Jesus is not asking anyone to become a cannibal. He is speaking figuratively. In essence, He is saying, "I am everything you need to survive spiritually. The same way food and water sustain your physical life, I sustain your spiritual life." Good ground accepts the totality of Jesus. Each and every day, they want to please Him. They seek to understand His commandments, and they are consistently and persistently in His word. Ground good people feed off Jesus daily in order to become more like Him. Yet, there is another way to continually feed off Jesus' body and His blood.

The only other time Jesus commands us to eat of His body and drink of His blood is during the Passover supper the night he was to be betrayed. This event is more commonly known as the Last Supper. However, while this may be the last supper of Jesus' life up to this point, it is the first of many suppers good ground refers to as Communion, or the Lord's Supper. Paul talks about it in his first letter to the Corinthians: *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it. in remembrance of Me"* (11:23-25). Is Jesus speaking of only Communion when He says that He is the bread of life? No. He is speaking of the entire Christian life, of which, Communion is a vital part.

Good ground follows Jesus. But we should not follow Him just to see what we can get out of Him like the crowds after the feeding of the 5000. We should seek Him for who He is and what we can do to serve Him. Jesus gave up His literal body and blood at the cross of Calvary. He handed over His life to death, so that we might have an everlasting life with the Father. Therefore, we should seek to take in the totality of who Jesus is by remembering Him at the Table of Communion. When we remember Him, we honor Him. When we honor Him, He will sustain us spiritually. But we must eat His flesh and drink His blood.

Does eating this spiritual food really result in changes in who and what we are? Paul says in Romans 8:28 that it is God's design for us to be *conformed to the image of His Son*. Paul further says we are to be *transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God* (Romans 12:2). Paul begins to get specific when he says *Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh. to fulfill its lusts* (Rom 13:13-14).

When does this transformation begin to happen? The Word of the Lord is plain. *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*. (Gal 3:27). Our faith in and obedience to the Christ involves change-changing into the image of Christ. Putting on Christ means *Putting* *on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). It means letting all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from us, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you* (Ephesians 4:31-32). It means *putting on the breastplate of righteousness* (Ephesians 6:14). It *means putting off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth and to not lie to one another. Put on tender mercies, kindness. humility, meekness, longsuffering: bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love*. (from Col 3:10-14)

Paul sums it up with this: *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory*. (2 Corinthians 3:18) The proof that we are GOOD GROUND is no found in our personal perfection, but in our transformation into the image of Christ. In 1922 B. B. McKinney wrote this Hymn: ***While passing through this world of sin, and others your life shall view, Be clean and pure without, within, let others see Jesus in you. Let others see Jesus in you, let others see Jesus in you; keep telling the story, be faithful and true, let others see Jesus in you.***

Are we expected to assemble as the church on Sunday (the Lord's Day)? Yes. Are we expected to participate in the communion with Christi on Sunday (the Lord's Day) Most certainly, but this doesn't prove we are good ground that is nourished by the Water of Life, if we are not changed. Our conduct must be worthy of the gospel of Christ. We must stand fast as the body of Christ in one spirit, and with one mind strive together for the faith of the Gospel. (Philippians 1:27) When we are doing this, we are GOOD ground nourished by the Water of Life. Our life's book is before men's eye. Do they see Jesus in us? May it ever be sol