

Every Tuesday at Fresh Market down the road, the parking lot is filled with cars. Everyone that enters the building rushes to the meat counter to take a number. The customer waits to be able to purchase ground chuck for 2.99 a lb. and organic chicken breasts for 2.99 a pound. What a deal! When my wife goes to Fresh market on Tuesdays, she goes in and quickly grabs a number, does some shopping, and then comes back a ½ hour later when her number is getting closer to being called. She orders the organic chicken breasts. Why is organic so important? What does it mean?

The birds must be raised organically no later than two days after they hatch; They must be fed certified organic feed for their entire lives. Organic feed cannot contain animal by-products, antibiotics or genetically engineered grains and cannot be grown using persistent pesticides or chemical fertilizers. All birds must have outdoor access. It is prohibited to give drugs, antibiotics and hormones to organic birds. Maybe, if I eat organic chicken, I will live longer and not get cancer. Organic chicken must be better for me to eat.

A beautiful, pear-looking fruit called ackee is the national fruit of Jamaica. But ackee is banned in the United States because it was discovered that it contains toxins that can cause your blood sugar to plummet to dangerous levels, possibly even leading to fatality.

Over the years, through experience and through testing, we have learned about foods and drinks that might be dangerous to us. Taking in all the evidence of the past, it would be foolish for us to ignore everything we have learned and to consume those foods anyway. We would be disregarding our own health. We would be putting ourselves in the way of danger. How foolish that would be.

So today, being wise and astute Christians, we will do well to listen carefully to the words of Jesus and ***Eat Organic Spiritual Food that Truly Satisfies!***

The day before, Jesus miraculously multiplied bread and fish to feed over 5,000 people. The crowds nearly overwhelmed him, trying to force him to be the earthly king they were looking for. That night Jesus and his disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee and came to Capernaum. In the morning, when the crowds realized he was gone, they went looking for him. Eventually they also crossed the Sea of Galilee over to Capernaum. That's where we cut in today.

The people were looking for Jesus for the wrong reasons. They wanted Premier homes in the Villages, Bonefish grill meals, and flat-screen TVs hanging in their bedrooms. They wanted earthly things from Jesus, not heavenly things.

It was Jewish popular belief that when the Messiah came, he would once again start the flow of Manna from heaven like Moses had done for Israel. The Jews were looking for someone who would provide physical bread for Israel again like in the desert. Essentially they were asking here for Jesus to prove He is the promised Messiah by starting up the MANNA again and meeting their physical needs in a greater way than Moses had done for Israel in the past.

Moses provided bread for 3½ million Jews, Jesus had only fed 5,000 men plus women and children. Moses provided bread for 40 years; Jesus had only given them bread once. Moses had given them bread from heaven. Jesus had used only earthly bread and multiplied it.

The trouble was, they were focused on physical bread, a return to what they thought of an easier lifestyle where God simply took care of their physical needs. They were only looking to satisfy their immediate physical needs, they couldn't even see how

empty their souls were!

George Orwell once described the human nature in this way. He wrote of a wasp that was sucking a spot of jam on his plate, when he took a butter knife and cut the insect in half. The wasp paid no attention, though. He merely went on with his meal, while a tiny stream of jam trickled out of his severed esophagus. Only when he tried to fly away did he realize what had happened to him.

Many people have a lot in common with that wasp. It seems the majority of people in life could care less about spiritual things. They are consumed with seizing the day, selfishly consuming life's sweetness. Only when it's time to fly away will they grasp their lost condition.

We tend to want Jesus for earthly things as well. Jesus, things sure would be easier if I had better health as I get older. Jesus, life sure would be better if I won the lottery. I sure would be happier if I had an extra zero or two (or three) in my bank account." Jesus, I sure would be happier if my grandchildren lived closer to me. Not only do we want these earthly things from Jesus, but then we get a little upset when we don't get them. "Why do I have to struggle? Why do I have to have these chronic health issues? How come I can't have a super secure retirement? So quickly we lose focus on what truly matters. We want Jesus for earthly things, not heavenly things.

So Jesus tries to redirect the crowd and us to heavenly things. The crowd then asks Jesus a question: They said, "What must we do to do the works God requires"? Was there an entry or membership fee? Did they have to go through spiritual boot camp? Did the tithe hit inflation and rise from 10% to 15%? They wanted a quick and easy answer of what they could do to earn the right to call Jesus their earthly king. They wanted a shortcut to salvation. Jesus corrected them once more. "**The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.**" They didn't have to do anything. They only needed to believe in him.

Believe in Jesus? The carpenter's son from Nazareth? Yeah, he did some pretty impressive miracles. But believe in him like he's from God? What could he do to prove his worth? In the past Moses led them through the desert and bread fell out of the sky for them to eat every day for 40 years. What could Jesus do?

The Jews looked to Jesus for the wrong reasons. They wanted a shortcut to salvation. They wanted impressive signs and wonders from Jesus so he could earn their faith and trust. All the while they were missing the most simple and important of truths—the organic bread of life standing before them and offering himself and salvation to them for free!

When it comes to spiritual things, we like the quick and easy route too. "**What must we do to do the works God requires,**" we also ask. "So how much time do I have to put in? How many Sundays do I have to come to church? You think two out of four is okay? Or just tell me how many events I have to help out at, or how big of a check do I have to write? Just let me know. I'll do it, because I'm a Christian, and I guess that's what I have to do."

So Jesus counsels and redirects us. "No, no, my child. It's not about works. Simply believe in the one God has sent. Believe in me," Jesus tenderly says. "You, Jesus? Believe in you? What have you done for me lately? Why should I believe in you? I don't see you doing much in the world today. I don't see you flexing any muscles. In fact, I only see Christians and Christianity getting trampled upon. Show

me something. Do a little miracle. Fix my retirement account to last longer. End a war. Redirect a hurricane. Just do something, Jesus, to prove you are worth my time and my faith.” Seem too extreme to you? “Alright, Pastor Mark, you made your point. We get a little carried away at times. We lose focus a bit. We look for shortcuts. We want the wrong things out of Jesus.

Everyone needs to clearly see that Jesus is the ultimate organic bread from heaven. Consider how bread is made. Wheat grows in the field, then it is cut down, winnowed, and ground into flour. It passes through the fire of the oven and is then distributed around the world. Only by this process does bread become bread. Each step is essential. Eliminate the plant, and you have no wheat. Eliminate the winnowing, and you have no flour. Eliminate the fire, and you have no product. Eliminate the distribution and you have no satisfaction.

Now consider Jesus. He grew up as a small plant before the Lord. But like wheat, he was cut down. Like chaff he was pounded and beaten. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. And like bread he passed through the fire. On the cross he passed through the fire of God’s anger, not because of his sin, but because of ours. Jesus experienced every part in the process of making bread: the growing, the pounding, the firing. The final process, the distribution, he leaves to us. WE are the distributors. We can’t force people to eat the bread, but we can make sure they have it.

Jesus is the Bread – the nourishment – from God. He is the manna from heaven. He is the one who offers forgiveness. He offers peace and freedom from guilt and shame. And this is nourishment we need to partake of daily. Sadly, our sinful hearts are tempted to leave this living bread on the table as a leftover. Have you ever gone to a restaurant and gotten an order of bread with dinner? When the breadbasket arrives everyone is excited at first. People will munch down one or two pieces in a matter of minutes. That’s until the main course comes, though. And the rest of the bread remains untouched. At the end of the meal, people don’t even want to look at the bread, and ask the server to take it away, let alone wrap it up in a take home box.

We are tempted to treat Christ – the Living Bread – in the same way. At times, we welcome him until something better comes along. People may come to church simply to please somebody else, or because their tap into this world’s sweets has gone dry. People may have come to church simply because that’s what you do on Sunday, but there’s the temptation not to take Christ home with you. We need to take Jesus home with us. We need to continue to feed upon his Word. It is necessary that we nourish our souls on his gospel – the good news of forgiveness and salvation. That is why we need Bible study. All of our mid-week Bible study opportunities come equipped with enough ‘bread’ to take home and use during the week.

Let’s continue to keep eating the best organic food in the universe. The Word of God. This food will not leave us hankering for more. God’s Word satisfies spiritual appetites. It doesn’t even cost 2.99 a pound. It’s free! Open Bible is the ultimate Fresh Market. Listen to Jesus **“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”**