

Rev. Melissa Hatfield
Sunday, August 2, 2009
First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, MO
Text: John 6:24-35
Title: The Bread of Life

A few years ago, Staples, the office supply store, began a marketing campaign around this – the Easy button. Simply push the button whenever you are faced with a challenging task and instantly, your problem is solved. Have you seen any of the commercials? They became so popular that Staples actually created the Easy Button product after the fact. Commercials usually sell a product rather than create one. Here is one of my favorite Easy Button commercials. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZUoWnTKsFY&feature=related>) It's so easy even a baby could use it. Incidentally, the proceeds from the sale of these buttons are donated to the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.¹

Every wonder why this toy became popular? Most of us know that it doesn't really work – it really isn't *that* easy. But deep down we wish it was that easy. We like easy. If we have to have problems, at least we should have quick and easy solutions.

The crowd in our text this morning is no different. They want easy too. They want a low-cost, low-commitment easy button to solve their problems. And that easy button appeared to be Jesus.

Let's read our text for this morning from the Gospel of John 6:24-35.

Ever been called out? It's awkward. Now, imagine being called out by Jesus. Infinitely more awkward. But that is what happens in our passage of Scripture today. If you were here last Sunday, Jeanie preached on the verses just before this in chapter six where Jesus feeds the five thousand with a young boy's sorry excuse for a lunch – two fish and five pieces of bread. Kids – how would you like to find that in your back to school

¹ Easy button analogy came from Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor at Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Stone Mountain, Georgia in his Sept. 3, 2006 sermon "Where is that Easy Button?"

lunch box? Yet, Jesus takes this small offering, blesses it, and feeds the masses - with plenty left over.

After Jesus works this amazing miracle, he and the disciples head out by boat to the next place on the journey, Capernaum – on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The people look around and realize that Jesus is no longer with them. Realizing that they are about to lose a good thing, a free lunch so-to-speak, they head out in boats in pursuit of Jesus. When they find him, they act like a guy who plans an accidental run-in at Target on his current crush.

Verse 25 - “Hey, Rabbi. What are the odds. What brings you here to this side of the lake?”

Ever had one of those conversations? The conversations where you know in your gut that they're lying and you want so badly to call them out on it but instead, you play along.

Well, rejoice this morning, in the knowledge that Jesus called them out. Not very seeker-sensitive of him. In verse 26, he says, “You came looking for me. Not because you wanted me but because I fed you.” This is the moment when the disciples were snickering and pointing at the crowd, saying, “oh, snap”. (Modern-day lingo for “you're busted.” For once, they were glad not to be on the receiving end of Jesus' truth-telling.

We should give the crowd a little bit of credit. At least they took the effort to go after Jesus. They recognized that they wanted more of Jesus or what he could offer. That is more than some of us manage to do. However, Jesus could see the motive behind their pursuit. He knew that they were only seeking him because He had fed them for free and they wondered, “what else could he do for us?” “If he could feed all of us with a meal of fish and chips, what else could he do? How could he make life easier for us?” (Push button)

So, after Jesus calls them on why they really came after him, and an awkward minute or two passes, he proceeds to talk with them about what it really all means.

²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.’²

That lunch I gave you yesterday. It may have fed your stomach for a few hours but it won't last. Look, you've already come looking for more. But there is a different Bread – a Bread that lasts. A living Bread. Work for that Bread instead.

²⁸Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?”

The crowd likes what they hear. Okay, so there's better bread. Bread that never molds or gets stale. Sweet. What do we have to do to get that bread?

²⁹Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Where's an easy button when you need one?

It sounds so easy but even the crowd knew that believing in Jesus was not easy. Sure, he had done some miraculous things and people were talking about him in every town and village. But there were a lot of strange things about this guy. And the things he was asking of you? A little too demanding. To believe in this teacher who claimed to be the son of God?

So, still with yesterday's miraculous lunch in their belly they ask for a sign to help them believe. It wasn't enough that Jesus fed 5,000 people with one lunchable?

³⁰So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

We've said this before, haven't we? Why doesn't God give us a sign like God did for our ancestors? Preacher William Willimon writes, “Sometimes I have heard people say,

² New Revised Standard Version

'I wish I could have lived in the first century and witnessed for myself the work of Jesus, actually seen him face to face.' The implication of this desire is that belief would somehow be easier. You could stand face-to-face with who Jesus was and choose for yourself. But if that were the case, why did more people of that day seem to reject Jesus than follow him?"³ Evidently, Jesus did not make faith easy enough for them or us. I would just believe if God would provide some sign. The crowd said, "If you can show us a sign, we'll believe."

³²Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Again, there he goes with that bread thing. The bread that endures. The bread that will always satisfy. Man, that sounds great.

³⁴They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." ³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Back to this again. Believe in Him.

Jesus had met their physical needs. He had provided them lunch when they were most in need but He loved them enough to not leave it there. Once they were fed, He wanted them to understand where true and lasting nourishment came from. Yet, they kept coming back to their present needs and how to get them met in the easiest and quickest way. When they realized that Jesus was not an easy button, many left him to look elsewhere.

Life is hard sometimes. Jobs are difficult or lost. Co-workers make life unbearable and difficult. Don't get me started on Music Ministers. Relationships wound and disappoint. Children stray and set out on their own paths that sometimes lead to heartache and pain. All of us dream of having an easy button to push that can solve problems or make

³ William Willimon. ***Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony.***

them disappear. The crowds that clamored for Jesus thought they found theirs. “Sir, give us this bread always.”

Did Jesus satisfy their request? Did he make life or faith easier for them? I don't think so because that was not his intent. The next day, life and faith was just as challenging as the previous one.

When we realize that Jesus is not the easy button, we look elsewhere. Why? Because we are more committed to easy than we are to Jesus.

So what did Jesus offer? What does he provide for the few that decide to believe in him? He gives us strength. He gives us mercy. He gives us wisdom. He gives Himself.

There is a Spanish proverb that says, “With Bread and Wine you can walk your road.”. For us, Jesus is that Bread and Wine. And when you believe in Him, you can walk your road.