

Can you believe the story in John’s gospel? / find it hard to believe! There were 5000 men to feed, plus their women and children, and only five loaves of bread and two fish. But Jesus took what was offered, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the hungry crowd—and it was enough.

I don’t have trouble believing *that*. The hard part for me is the next phrase: **When they were satisfied. . . .**

It almost seems against human nature to be *satisfied*. At least in our western world, our culture of over-abundance, we’re bombarded on all sides with visions and images of what we *need*, what we *just have to have*, in order to be satisfied. We live in a “gotta-have-it” society which tries to tell us that we’ll never be complete, or fulfilled, or truly happy, without *it*—whatever *it* may be.

And that’s really sad, because the only thing we’ve *really* “got to have” is *faith in Jesus Christ*, the only Son of God, the Father Almighty. Without Jesus, everything else is worth nothing at all!

**Sing verse 1 of *Break Now the Bread of Life***  
(public domain)

LBW 235, ELW 515, HP 1579

***Break now the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,  
As once you broke the loaves beside the sea.  
Beyond the sacred page I seek you, Lord;  
My spirit waits for you, O living Word.***

On that mountain in Galilee 2000 years ago, Jesus took what little food was available and caused it to be enough. How does it happen that so many people throughout the world have drawn so far away from God? How did we come to value him so lightly, to pay so little attention to him?

Somehow during the last 70 years or so—at least since the end of World War II—it seems we’ve begun to take so much for granted. The material blessings my parents rejoiced over at the end of that war were, for me, every-day conveniences I never gave much thought to while I was growing up.

In fact, it never occurred to me that some people my age in this country were still using outhouses. Some didn't even have electricity! I grew up in Los Angeles, where everyone had inside plumbing and hot running water; we even had a washing machine!

In the same way, I think, whole generations of Christians have grown up taking *God* for granted. Instead of worshiping joyfully and thankfully every week, recognizing God as the source of all blessings, many began to see *human ingenuity and hard work* as the way to a successful and satisfactory life.

Now Baby Boomers have given way to Busters, and Generation X to Generation Y, and the Millennials (and now, perhaps, the *Coronials!*). And while there may be a lot of *religion* practiced in the United States, there's not always a lot of *faith*. At least, not the true faith that guides the actions God desires. Things like justice, righteousness, steadfast love. Caring for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger in our midst. Loving our neighbors as ourselves. Respecting the outcast, the voiceless, the "other."

**Sing verse 2 of *Break Now the Bread of Life***

LBW 235, ELW 515, HP 1579

***Bless your own truth, dear Lord, to me, to me,  
As when you blest the bread by Galilee.  
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;  
And I shall find my peace, my All-in-All!***

We have a hunger for God that can't be filled by anyone or anything else, ever. It's how God made us. When we lose touch with God, we try to fill that hunger with *stuff*, with *relationships*, with *success* or *adventure* or *wealth* or *power*, or *escape*. But it won't work. The more we try to "succeed" in life on our own, the hungrier we feel for God.

It's only when we stop striving, when we *let go and let God*, that God can begin to come to us in a meaningful way. Only when we stop pursuing and worshiping the things that are created by *us* can we recognize the supremacy of the *Creator*, his glory and power, his gracious mercy and steadfast love.

The gift God gave you in baptism wasn't to save you from the *consequences* of your sins, but from the need or desire to *commit* those sins in the first place. God freed you from *bondage to sin*. God freed you *for freedom* in him—freedom that doesn't depend on the stuff of life as we know it here and now, or on the approval of others.

God freed you *for himself*, so you could know the depth and power of the love he lavishes on you as his beloved child.

**Sing verse 3 of *Break Now the Bread of Life***

LBW 235, ELW 515, HP 1579

***You are the bread of life, O Lord, to me.  
Your holy Word the truth that rescues me.  
Give me to eat and live with you above;  
Teach me to love your truth, for you are love.***

The freedom God gives is yours for the taking! Once you know it's there, it's easier to access it. The last paragraph our Ephesians text is a wonderful description of how it works: **Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. . . .** I don't know about you, but I can imagine a whole lot of things I'd like God to accomplish within me!

- Free me from selfish desires;
- Focus my mind more firmly during my prayer time;
- God give me patience—*right now*;
- Stir me to quicker acceptance of people and situations that give me pause;
- Increase my hope that a better world for all people is possible in this life.

Let's pray: Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord. In you we live and move and have our being. Each day you show us a Father's love; your Holy Spirit, dwelling within us, gives us *on earth* the hope of unending joy. As we celebrate your eternal forgiveness of all our sins, fill us with thankful praise for your glory. Amen.

**Sing verse 4 of *Break Now the Bread of Life***

LBW 235, ELW 515, HP 1579

***Oh, send your Spirit, Lord, now unto me,  
That he may touch my eyes and make me see.  
Show me the truth concealed within your Word,  
And in your book revealed I see my Lord.***

Thanks be to God!