

## Infectious Yeast 4-17-05

Matthew 16:5-12 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. <sup>6</sup> "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." <sup>7</sup> They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread." <sup>8</sup> Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?" <sup>9</sup> Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? <sup>10</sup> Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? <sup>11</sup> How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." <sup>12</sup> Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Sometimes when we read the Gospels, we forget that the disciples were ordinary men like us. It sounds to me like they were frustrated and disappointed that:

<sup>5</sup> When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread.

Maybe there was one of those conversations, "I thought you were going to get it!"

"Well, I thought it was your turn to buy the bread." "Me? Judas has the money." I am sure you have experienced those kinds of conversations. Then everyone starts to get upset because we are not sure if we are going to eat or not. Did you ever go for a picnic and someone left behind the main ingredient? It kind of spoils the whole trip.

We are all wrapped up in whose fault it was, and worried about what is going to happen and we miss altogether what God is doing. Jesus overheard the bread discussion and used it as an opportunity to teach. They were worried about eating, and Jesus was saying that there are more important things to be concerned about.

<sup>6</sup> "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

In the sermon last week (*How Many Chances Do You Need?*), we saw how the Pharisees and Sadducees were at opposite ends of the religious spectrum, yet had teamed up to attack Jesus. It would be a little bit like Republicans and Democrats teaming up to attack a popular independent that was getting votes from both their parties. The Jewish culture had bought into the teachings of these two main parties. How they reacted to Jesus influenced the bulk of the population. Cultures have a groupthink. Even when we believe we have our own ideas, we are influenced by the culture we are immersed in. We have a natural self-preservation fear that desires to fit in. We do not want to stand out as odd or different, so we accept the standards our society accepts.

Jesus warned them that being careful about providing for your meal was not nearly as important as being careful about spiritual teaching. (John 6:27) What you accept or eat spiritually is much more important than worrying about having physical bread to eat. (Matthew 6:31-33)

**Commented [notes1]:** <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." John 6:27 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:31-33 (NIV)

Do you understand? I ask because the disciples missed it entirely.

<sup>7</sup> *They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."* They were so absorbed with the worry about their bread that they completely missed it. That may have been over a concern for not needing to buy bread from Gentiles. Perhaps they thought that Jesus was worried about kosher bread not polluted by Gentile hands. Nevertheless, whatever was going through their minds, they were thinking physically instead of spiritually. We can do the same with Scripture, or even when the Spirit of God speaks to our heart. It helps to remember that God is much more concerned about the heart than all our physical details and rituals. (Psalm 51:17) That understanding will help to guide our interpretations.

**Commented [notes3]:** <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.  
Psalms 51:17 (NIV)

Here is how we tend to fall into the same pattern. Something goes wrong in our routine, we catch a cold, or have an accident. Then we look at the physical and wonder, "Is it because I did not go to church last Sunday?" "Could it be that God is punishing me because I did not tithe last week?" God may deal with our hearts through affliction, but He is not going to whack you over the head because you missed church. Now He may discipline you because you love leisure more than fellowship, but that is a heart issue, not a matter of rules. (Hosea 6:6)

**Commented [notes4]:** <sup>6</sup> For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.  
Hosea 6:6 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> *Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?"<sup>9</sup> Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?<sup>10</sup> Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?*

Those first century boats were not very big. Unless the wind was blowing, you could hear everything that was said. Jesus could hear that their conversation focused on the need for bread and gave them a little rebuke. "You of little faith..." This is the third time He used the expression in the Gospel of Matthew. Please allow me to paraphrase. Jesus was saying something like this. "Don't you get it? When I fed the 5000 how much was left over? Way more than we started with. And when I fed the 4000 was it any different? Didn't you let the reality of my ability to meet the needs of the entire world settle into your heart? How could you worry about not having bread after witnessing those miracles?" (Matthew 6:34)

**Commented [notes5]:** <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.  
Matthew 6:34 (NIV)

**Commented [notes6]:** <sup>25</sup> I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.  
Psalms 37:25 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** <sup>18</sup> But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.  
Deuteronomy 8:18 (NIV)

What would He say to us? If the disciples had little faith, what would He tell us when we say things like, "I do not know what I will do for employment." "I know God is calling me to do this or that, but I cannot do it until I have my retirement income." Or even, "But what about my health, I do not think I have the energy." He would probably say the same thing to us. "Don't you get it? Have I ever let you go hungry? (Psalms 37:25) Have you ever been unable to do whatever I asked you to do? Who gives man his ability to make an income? (Deuteronomy 8:18) Who gives health and heals the body? You of little faith. After all I have done in your life, why would you look to your own ability now? (Jeremiah 10:23) Do you think you did it on your own in the past?" Then He might remind us of the times He has seen us through trials and met our need or healed and strengthened us, just as He did for the disciples. He does that, not to belittle us, but to increase our faith. (Job 23:10)

**Commented [notes8]:** <sup>23</sup> I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.  
Jeremiah 10:23 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** <sup>10</sup> But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.  
Job 23:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes10]:** <sup>16</sup> He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you.  
Deuteronomy 8:16 (NIV)

He fed a nation in the wilderness, (Deuteronomy 8:16) thousands on a hillside, a widow, her son, and a prophet for years from two jars (1 Kings 17:14). He can even

**Commented [notes11]:** <sup>14</sup> For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land."  
1 Kings 17:14 (NIV)

use ravens to feed us! (1 Kings 17:4). He feeds all the creatures of the earth. (Psalms 104:27) He reminded us in the Sermon of the Mount that He feeds the sparrows and that we are of more value than sparrows. (Matthew 6:26) So what are we all stressed out about? We fall for the misperception that it is all up to us. Yes, we have to do as God directs us, but the when we do, the results are up to God. He is Jehovah Jireh. (Genesis 22:14) All our needs are met in Him. (Philippians 4:19)

*11 How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

Jesus had to make it very plain to them that it was a symbolic term. The Bible is full of symbolism. Yeast is that which permeates. The Jewish culture of Jesus' day was permeated with the teaching of these two groups. Since Jesus was telling them to beware of their teaching, we should take some time to examine what they taught and how that teaching is still around today.

The Pharisees were the ultra-orthodox. They were the legalists who wanted to see every minute detail of the Law kept, and added a few thousand more rules so that the 600 plus rules in the Bible were kept. They were like lawyers of Biblical Law. Wanting to keep God's rules is a good thing. The problem was that they relied on obedience to the rules for their righteousness, even though they could not keep all the rules. (John 7:19) So to disguise that fact, they made up more rules so that anyone watching them would have to have spent their life studying the rules to know if they really were breaking them or not. They could pretend to keep their own rules because they had to do with formalities. Then they could condemn everyone else who did not know all the details of their rules, or through necessity or circumstance could not keep them. In the end, they had everyone thinking all these rituals made God respect you. It was really a heartless and cold way of making demands on people, and making themselves look good. (Luke 11:46)

God's laws were given out of love and guidance for the nation of Israel. They were not demands, or even a way to righteousness. They were rules to keep them healthy, teach them about worship, and keep their society orderly. They came from the heart of a loving Father for His children. (Proverbs 4:1) The Pharisees had made them look like the demands of a heartless tyrant who was ready to beat any servant that would not obey.

Jesus says, "Beware of that kind of teaching!" You are righteous because of what Jesus did in your place, not because you keep a set of rules. (Isaiah 54:17) Do not picture God as some ogre who is demanding you do what he wants or he will whack you. He is a loving Father who only asks you to do what is for your own good. (Deuteronomy 4:40) How many people in our world today have that distorted monster view of God because someone relayed that to them? When we meet someone caught up in sin, we should not tell him or her to stop doing that before God smites them. We tell them God asks us not to do it because He knows the consequences that will result from that action will harm our lives.

**Commented [notes12]:** <sup>4</sup>You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." 1 Kings 17:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes13]:** <sup>27</sup>These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. Psalms 104:27 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Matthew 6:26 (NIV)

**Commented [notes15]:** <sup>14</sup> So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." Genesis 22:14 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** <sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** <sup>19</sup> Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?" John 7:19 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** <sup>46</sup> Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them. Luke 11:46 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** <sup>1</sup> Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. Proverbs 4:1 (KJV)

**Commented [notes20]:** <sup>17</sup> No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD. Isaiah 54:17 (KJV)

**Commented [notes21]:** <sup>40</sup> Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time. Deuteronomy 4:40 (NIV)

We quote the verse in Hebrews about not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together when they do not go to church. (Hebrews 10:25) We should be telling them that God asks us to stay in fellowship because it helps us grow and helps the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:16) We tell people not to go to an R movie, then along comes The Passion. Whoops! Instead, we should encourage people not to see things that will hurt their spiritual growth, because growing in Christ is a wonderful and fulfilling experience. It is God's loving will for us. (Ephesians 4:13)

**Commented [notes22]:** <sup>25</sup> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:16 (NIV)

**Commented [notes24]:** <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:13 (NIV)

I know a dear couple that I believe love the Lord. I am using an example of someone none of you knows. They seem to have the joy of the Lord, but they always come across as if God was making these legalistic demands. They are quick to say how they never do this or that. It flat out turns people away. They are not attracting people to Jesus; they are driving them away. Because the impression that comes across is one of demands without love, that righteousness comes through abstaining from pleasure. People run from their so-called witness. It witnesses a harsh demanding God, not the God of the Bible who asks us to abstain from something out of love and concern for us.

It is so easy to fall into this way of thinking, because hard and fast rules are always easier to live by than love. Love makes demands that rules would never make. (Romans 13:10) Rules have loopholes, love does not. Love requires patience and sacrifice. Rules only ask for wrote obedience. "Beware," Jesus said, "Of this kind of teaching. It permeates man's culture like yeast permeates bread."

**Commented [notes25]:** <sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:10 (NIV)

The teaching of the Sadducee is the opposite end of the spectrum. They are the secularists of their day. They only accept the part of Scripture they want and misinterpret that. They see no need to be religious, and see the world's culture as full of wonderful advances that we should enjoy. There is no afterlife, so live for today and enjoy it while you can.

Today's secularists have gone a step further. They deny God altogether. To them, man is an accident. Right and wrong are relative to the situation and culture. Maybe there is no right and wrong. Who knows? Who is to say, since there are no absolutes.

**Commented [notes26]:** <sup>15</sup> Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:15 (NIV)

They have thrown away the guidelines given us by a loving God and replaced them with personal opinion and desire. It is really a declaration that every individual is his own lord and master. Though they might say we should be loving and kind, they have nothing to base that statement on and cannot define it. The logical conclusion of that kind of thinking is that man should be selfish and greedy. "Beware," Jesus says. That kind of thinking permeates our culture as well. (Luke 12:15)

**Commented [notes27]:** <sup>9</sup> For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Romans 13:9 (KJV)

So where is the balanced teaching? What is the way that God would direct us? It is the way of love. (Romans 13:9) It is the way of trust in Jesus, God's provision, not our own ability or effort. (Galatians 2:16) It is a new heart created within us when we come to Christ as our Savior. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

**Commented [notes28]:** <sup>16</sup> know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. Galatians 2:16 (NIV)

This week I heard a very timely sermon from John MacArthur. He was explaining two very different historical views within the Protestant church. In the 1700s,

**Commented [notes29]:** <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

Jonathan Edwards wrote some of our classic American literature. He was an instrument of God during the first great awakening in America. He wrote a treatise about the assurance of salvation. In it, he tells us that the one great evidence of salvation is the transformation of desires. Holy desires are a sure sign that God has changed your heart. He believed that if you were truly born again, you had a new heart with godly desires. He did not believe that this would or even could be changed. You might not always act in a holy way, but you would regret any ungodly action because it was not your true desire.

He went on to explain that many people have feelings resulting from the work of the Holy Spirit. These are pre-salvation works of the grace of God to bring us to repentance. He claimed that many people mistake those feeling for salvation. They have never repented, or turned away from, their old ways. The one way to tell if they had truly repented and been born again is a change in the heart's desires.

John Wesley, on the other hand, believed that once you repented and had a heart change, you would have holy desires, but that you could lose that salvation and your heart could turn back to the world. You were no longer saved and needed to repent again. These are the two main branches of the Protestant faith. However, they both agree that salvation is evidenced by a transformation of the heart.

Lately, a third view has sprung up, one that neither of these great men would have adhered to. Many today believe you can come to salvation and have no change of heart. They believe that you go on living with the same old desires; you just have a free pass to heaven. However, that is not what the Bible teaches. *If any man is in Christ He is a new creation.* 2 Corinthians 5:17a (NIV) God said through Ezekiel, *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.* Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV)

Beware of teaching that salvation does not change your heart's desires. Do not be lulled into a false sense of security that keeping rules will make you right with God or that there is no afterlife. Salvation is evidenced by a heart change. If you have eternal life, you will see it in the desire to please God. (Mark 12:33) You will see it in a life of love as opposed to a life of selfishness. (John 15:17) You will see it in an increasing Christ likeness. (2 Corinthians 3:18) You will not be perfect, but you will desire to walk in the Spirit. Beware of any teaching that tells you otherwise, whether it is wrote obedience to a set of rules, or ignoring the need for a changed heart.

*Will you take home these two lessons from this passage? If Jesus has baskets full of leftovers from feeding thousands, He can certainly meet your physical needs! But more importantly, He is the one who can change your heart! Beware of anything other teaching.*

**Commented [notes30]:** <sup>33</sup>To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." Mark 12:33 (NIV)

**Commented [notes31]:** <sup>17</sup>This is my command: Love each other. John 15:17 (NIV)

**Commented [notes32]:** <sup>18</sup>And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)