

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Soul Food John 4:31-34

There are so many desperate people. There are so many hurting people in this world. When they come across our path hopefully we will be prepared to minister to them. Hopefully we will be prepared to minister the love of Jesus. Extending care to people in need of course means that we are willing to share with those in need the material resources that God has entrusted to us. But it needs to go beyond this. It must also include a sincere and concerted effort to point people to the Lord and to the spiritual resources available in Him.

If we would faithfully do this hopefully we will be a part of a great harvest. Not a harvest of grain but rather of souls. This brings us to the passage **John 4:31-42** that we will begin to study this week.

Let me read this passage for you, **"In the meantime the disciples were requesting Him, saying 'Rabbi eat.' (32) But He said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' (33) The disciples therefore were saying to one another, 'No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?'" (34) Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. (35) Do you not say, "There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?" Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the field, that they are white for harvest. (36) Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. (37) For in this case the saying is true, "One sows, and another reaps." (38) I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.' (39) And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all the things that I have done.' (40) So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. (41) So many more believed because of His word; (42) And they were saying to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is indeed the Savior of the world.'"**

Hopefully we will not be satisfied to simply meet the temporal and material needs of people who may cross our path, even though meeting those needs is important. But we will most importantly seek to meet the spiritual needs of people as well. For us to do this well we will need to appreciate the efforts of Christ Himself as He sought to meet the needs of people. This brings us back to John 4:31-42 and to the following question: What are *three* major features of Christ's work outlined for us in John 4:31-42?

The first major feature of Christ's work is the proper *motive* (John 4:31-34). Let us read **John 4:31-34, "In the meantime the disciples were requesting Him, saying 'Rabbi eat.' (32) But He said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' (33) The disciples therefore were saying to one another, 'No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?'" (34) Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.** The disciples had been shocked by Christ's earlier interaction with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-30. For the life of them, they could not think of what might have motivated Him to do such a thing. Yet they

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remained silent. Though they were silent Christ knew their struggle and attempted to address their concern in **John 4:31-34**.

How does this passage begin? Let us look at **John 4:31**. It starts with the words "**In the meantime.**" The phrase "**in the meantime**" means that while the Samaritan woman went into the city of Sychar to share her testimony and to encourage the men of the city to visit Christ, something happened. And what was it? Let us continue to read the verse, "**In the meantime the disciples were requesting Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’**" After the Samaritan woman left, the disciples were encouraging Christ to eat the food that they had purchased in Sychar.

All of us I am sure understand the importance of food. Food is so important that the pursuit of it becomes a very powerful motivational force in our lives.

Certainly high on the list of things that keep people working even in jobs that they do not particularly enjoy is the pursuit of food. And of course even after we acquire enough money through hard work to feed our families, meals still need to be planned and food still needs to be bought, prepared and served. And of course most of this responsibility usually falls to the woman. I feel for women. And hopefully we as men will help them as best as we can to address this constant pressure that is upon them to provide regular healthy meals for the family.

There is an incredible amount of time and energy invested in feeding a family. I would think some wives and mothers would like to cross this whole food thing off their list, but unfortunately without food our physical bodies would eventually waste away and die. And because we all know this we will go to extreme measures in order to make sure that we eat, and if possible, eat as well as we can.

Certainly the disciples understood this and most likely did the best they could to provide food not only for themselves but also for Christ on their various travels. Certainly we see that effort here in **John 4**.

They had expended a considerable amount of time and effort not only in acquiring and transporting food from Sychar they also most likely expended more time and effort in preparing it. So I can imagine they were somewhat disappointed when Christ was not particularly interested in eating. But I would think that they would be more concerned than disappointed when he repeatedly refused to eat.

This concern by the disciples opened the door for Christ to address an underlying problem that became apparent to Him when the disciples returned from Sychar after buying food. What had happened when they returned? They were shocked to find Him talking with the Samaritan woman.

The disciples had a good handle on the food needed to nourish the body but they needed a better handle on the food needed to nourish the soul. Christ taking advantage of their concern that certainly was present based on **John 4:31**, will now attempt to help them get a better handle on "soul food" and what that practically meant to Him and hopefully what it would one day practically come to mean to them. So now let us look at **John 4:32**, "**But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’**" Obviously we know that Christ is speaking about the food needed to nourish the soul but the disciples thought He was talking about the food needed to nourish the body. The type of food they had purchased in Sychar.

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Because of this whatever concern they may have had for Christ turns simply into confusion. How do we know this?

Let us go on and read **John 4:33**, "**The disciples therefore were saying to one another, ‘No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?’**" They knew that He didn't have any food when they left him resting by the well. And they most likely would not have thought that the Samaritan woman would have given Him food considering their view of the Samaritans in general. So they were genuinely struggling with the question of how Jesus could have gotten food without them knowing about it.

Jesus mercifully does not let them struggle very long with their speculations. He goes on to explain to them what He meant. He goes on to explain to them that the food He was speaking about had nothing to do with nourishing the body but rather the soul.

Let us go on to **John 4:34** "**Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.’**" When Christ told His disciples that He had food that they did not know about, He was talking about the food that nourishes the soul.

And what specifically was that food that nourishes the soul? The food that nourishes the soul is doing the will of God and accomplishing His work. Obviously doing the will of God and accomplishing His work will not meet the physical needs of our body, but it will meet the spiritual needs of our soul. And this is why he refers to it as food.

But someone here might say, "But I thought the spiritual needs of our soul are met through a personal relationship with Christ?" And of course that is absolutely correct. But we must remember that those who have a personal relationship with Christ will do the will of God and accomplish His work (Matthew 12:46-50). Let me read for you **Matthew 12:46-50**, "**While He was still speaking to the multitudes (referring to Christ), behold His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him (47) And someone said to Him, ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to you.’ (48) But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, ‘Who is My mother and My brothers! (50) For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.’**"

We as human beings are composed of two basic parts: body and soul, the material and the immaterial. The body needs to be fed with one kind of food and the soul needs to be fed with an entirely different kind of food. And what must we as the followers of Christ feed upon? We as the followers of Christ must seek to do the will of God and accomplish His work if our soul is going to be fed. And this is exactly what Christ was doing in **John 4** in His interaction with the Samaritan woman. He was feeding His soul by doing the will of God and seeking to accomplish His work.

Doing His Father's will is why Christ came into this world. It was His spiritual food (John 5:36-37; 6:38). Let me read for you **John 5:36**, "**But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.**" And then listen to **John 6:38** "**For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.**" Jesus was not feeding on the soul food once in a while His whole life was committed to this activity.

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I would hope that in knowing this that we would find ourselves motivated to pursue the very same thing. That we would be as committed as Christ to continually feeding on this food, which is necessary for the nourishment of our souls.

Should this pursuit be more important to us than the pursuit of food for our bodies? Absolutely! But why should it be more important? Not only because it is what we should do in order to honor and glorify the Lord, but partaking of the food that will nourish our soul will dramatically impact the quality of our lives both in the present and in the future (Psalms 23). The present and future blessedness of this pursuit is captured for us in **Psalms 23.**

Listen to the words of this wonderful Psalm "**The Lord (the one whom I am seeking to please and whose work I am seeking to accomplish) is my shepherd, I shall not want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. (3) He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. (5) Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. (6) Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**" Is this the kind of life that you would like to have? Then I would encourage you to make the feeding of your soul the very highest priority of your life doing whatever is necessary in order no matter how painful or costly as a way of life in order to experience it.

And if we will do this, not only will we experience the blessings outlined for us in **Psalms 23.** But we also experience certain very specific side effects from time to time.

One specific side effect of making the consumption of spiritual food our highest priority will be unusual bursts of energy accompanied by a disinterest in food. I would hope that you yourself are very familiar with what I am saying experientially.

It happens with me all the time. It is happening to me now. When I get up on Sunday mornings I typically am not full of energy. I actually sometimes wonder how in the world I am going to have enough energy to do what I believe God would have me to do. This is so much on my mind each week that just before I get up to preach I will pray that the Lord would fill me with His strength. And He has always been faithful to answer this prayer. As I step forward onto this platform doing what I believe God would have me to do and seeking to accomplish His work it is as if I am at God's banquet table feasting on the spiritual food that Jesus was talking about to His disciples. And when I am feasting at God's banquet food getting energy that I did not know that I had food becomes the last thing on my mind. This is what happened to Christ in **John 4:31-34.**

Christ was sitting by Jacob's well resting. He was bone weary tired. Not only was He bone weary tired but He was also thirsty and hungry. But what happened? Christ's desire to do God's will and accomplish His work became like food to Him not only filling Him with energy but it also killing His appetite.

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Jesus knew that it was God's will for Him to shine His light upon that Samaritan woman and to offer her the gift of life and He fully committed Himself to that work. And this activity became to Him the food that the disciples really did not fully understand. But even though the disciples may not have fully understood what He was talking about, hopefully we do. But just understanding what soul food is and intellectually appreciating the importance of it to our lives does not mean that we are necessarily taking advantage of it.

What good is it if we know that we need spiritual food and even know where we can find it, but we never reach out and take it by submitting ourselves to the will of God totally and completely without compromise. We may have the loftiest thoughts about God and the tenderest feelings toward God as well, but if we do not surrender our will to His will, we will not partake of the spiritual food He provides and enjoy its benefits.

Some times people get hung up on the question of how one can know God's will for their lives. They might ask how they can know God's will about marriage or about a job or about some other major life decision. What people need to understand is that their focus should not be on what is not revealed but rather on what is revealed. What do I mean by this?

His revealed will is that we are saved. Is this true in your life? His revealed will is that we are sanctified, living a holy life. Is this true in your life? It is God's will that we meditate on God's word. Is this true of your life? It is God's will that we are committed to prayer. Is this true of your life? It is God's will that we love the brethren, is this true of your life? It is God's will that we are submissive to governing authorities. Is this true of your life?

If we are sincerely seeking to bring our lives completely in line with God's revealed will then everything that is not revealed will take care of itself. Augustine stated it this way, "Love God and do what you will." In other words, if we obey His revealed will, His specific desires for us will fall into place.

Sadly many people are seeking God's direction in their lives but are not conforming their lives to His revealed will. When there is no authentic submission to what God has already revealed, we will be hungry and dissatisfied because we have not fed our soul.

CONCLUSION

What is the secret of a genuine, fulfilling, godly life? Absolute submission to God's will. Those who purpose themselves to be absolutely submissive to God will feast at His banqueting table and will be able to say with the Psalmist "I shall not want."

There are a lot of hurting people in this world. Ask them to join you at the Lord's banqueting table.

There are those who are choosing to feast on empty pleasures – entertainment, food in excess, worldly amusements, fame or success. They are feeding on the wind. Ask them to join you at the Lord's banqueting table. The only food that will be able to truly satisfy us under any circumstances is doing the *will* and *work* of God.