

"Are You Hungry?"

John 16: 35

Lifepath Church

Christmas Eve 2011

For many of us the best thing about Christmastime is the food. Does anybody here have a big dinner planned for tomorrow. At our house we have our big meal around noon on Christmas. What are you having? Ham? Ham is a big Christmas food? Tamales? In Texas that's a traditional meal. We actually had tamales before coming over here. I heard that every Christmas eve the Schloz family has pastrami sandwiches. Musicians. Y'all are just strange. What about turkey? A lot of people eat that. We are not big turkey eaters at our house. I think Allie is barbequing a brisket. Nothing says Christmas - in Texas - like BBQ. What about dessert? Are you having apple pie? Pumpkin pie? I asked and we're having a layered peppermint cheesecake. I don't know what that is but it sounds good. Whatever your family tradition, most of us put on a pound or two at Christmastime. If we are blessed enough to be able, we indulge ourselves this time of year. We eat a big meal (or two or three). We eat until we are satisfied - until the belt feels a little tight and the only thing to do is to take a nap.

Let me ask you a question. No matter how big a meal you eat, how long is it before you get hungry again? We can eat and eat and eat until we are satisfied, but the satisfaction doesn't last forever, does it? We are going to get hungry again. Have you ever noticed that the same is true with just about anything in this life? You can really want something so much and you are sure that if you get it you will be satisfied, only to find the satisfaction does not last very long. Tomorrow morning is something that a lot of kids have been looking forward to for a month. In my house there are five sets of eyes that have been focused on those boxes and bags under the

tree. When will it be Christmas? Ugh, how long until Christmas? I need it to be Christmas! Tomorrow morning in lots of houses across the land children, sure that immeasurable joy awaits them, will rip into those brightly covered packages in the course of about 90 seconds. And the inevitable wail of lament will sound forth: "Is this all there is?!"

As we get older our satisfaction in getting what we want often lasts longer than 90 seconds. We get the promotion, the new house, the new car, the new clothes, the new boyfriend, and, for a brief moment, we are happy. But then the hunger comes back. Once again we feel the pangs of dissatisfaction and we say, "Is this all there is?" Some people are spurred on to go after more things: another promotion, another shipping trip, a different romantic partner. Another and another and another. Like hamsters on the wheel we run and run and get any place other than tired. Others sense that one more whatever is not going to make any difference and give up and become depressed. Is this all there is? Can't anything bring a true and lasting satisfaction?

What we celebrate tonight is the birth of a child who grew into a man who made an extraordinary claim: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6: 35). What he is saying is that true and eternal satisfaction is found with him. As long as we try to find fulfillment in other ways, we will be hungry. God tells us through the old prophet Isaiah, "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink – even if you have no money! Come, and take your choice of wine or milk – it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food (Isaiah 55: 1-2). God almost sounds frustrated in that passage, doesn't he? "Why do you work and work to get what ultimately is not going to satisfy you anyway? Here I am offering you soothing that will satisfy you forever. And it's free of charge! I'll give it to you right now!"

Those of you in this room tonight who are Christians, who believe and trust that Jesus is who he says he is – the Bread of Life – are there areas of your life in which you are experiencing deep dissatisfaction? Are you frustrated and disappointed with something or someone? Think about that area of your life for a second. Is it possible that you are trying to get your sense of self-worth and satisfaction from that thing or person rather than from the Lord who loves you? Maybe it's time to spend some time in prayer and ask him about it.

Those of you in this room who are not Christians, those of you who are here out of love and duty to your family, or for the sake of holiday tradition, are you satisfied with your life? Do you know a deep abiding fulfillment? Or are there some empty spots inside that, no matter what you do, you can't seem to ever fill? Jesus of Nazareth, this man whose birth we celebrate tonight, he claims to have the answer. He says that if you commit yourself to him, he will feed you with a deep inward joy that lasts, even through the disappointments of life. He says that if you believe in him he will feed you with a peace that is not dependent on outward circumstances. God puts it this way in Psalm 34. "Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!" (Psalm 34: 8). Why not believe in him? Why not put your hope in him? After all, the only thing you have to lose is your hunger.

Amen and Merry Christmas