

INTRO - In 1993 members of St. John started going across the Bering Strait from Nome to Provideniya and Lavrentiya Russia. We went to bring the Good News of Jesus. In order to do so, we tried to bring other help as well. We faced many interesting situations as different cultures met, but one of those situations helps me to explain the situation in today's Gospel lesson. Medical care was not as good in Russia, as in America. In fact, the daughter of the Mayor of Provideniya died from pneumonia for lack of medicine. One request of the doctors in Russia was a centrifuge. Through our member Sharon Schulling, who owned and ran Neighbor to Neighbor health clinic in Wasilla a centrifuge was donated, and we brought it to Russia. However, When our people arrived at the airport the customs people were not going to let it in, without some payment, that is. They wanted us to pay customs for the privilege of donating the vital instrument, and our people did not have this money requested. What the people NEEDED, was this centrifuge for better medical care. What the customs folks wanted, however, was money. And what they wanted was getting in the way of what they really needed.

I. The same is happening to the people in our text today. What they want is getting in the way of what they need.

A. It helps to remember the context of these verses.

1. Jesus had fed the 5000 men, plus the women and children, with only 5 loaves and 2 fish.

2. Knowing the people, he went off by himself. When the people found him, they asked where he had been. Jesus answered in verse 26, **"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <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."**

3. The people have the Son of God, right in front of them, and they are more interested in bread than in God, or more interested in bread than the life He offers.

B. The situation which explains our reading for today gets more bizzare.

1. Jesus has just fed the 5000, and the people seek him.

2. When Jesus tells them to look to him for food that leads to eternal life, to do so through believing, they doubt Him, and they ask in verse 30, **"What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? <sup>31</sup>Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: `He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"**

3. Can you imagine? Jesus feeds 5000, and they ask for a sign? They miss out on Jesus again.

C. Before you point your finger in ridicule at the Jews, we need to realize we have all done the same thing.

1. Has there ever been a time that Jesus has been offering you forgiveness, love, and peace, and eternal life, and you are more interested say in TV, or a movie, than in the Word of God?

2. Has there even been a time that Jesus has offered himself and fellowship with His people in worship, and you've been more interested in say, a bed, or a football game, or . . . well, you name it.

3. Has there ever been a time when you know what Jesus offers, but the other blessings he can give are more important, blessings such as material possessions, or wealth, or acceptance of others, or even health in this world, rather than eternal life in heaven?

II. Our people going to Russia tried to explain to the customs agents how much the centrifuge was needed, and how it was something the doctors in Russia themselves had asked for. They told them, but the guards didn't listen. They told the guards again. Finally, our folks called the mayor, and he told them how important it was.

A. Earlier in this chapter Jesus told the people that it was Him they needed, not bread, not signs.

1. In verse 32 he says, <sup>32</sup> **Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**

2. So, in today's lesson, Jesus continues to tell the people the same thing.

A. In verse 51 he says, <sup>51</sup> **I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."** Jesus is what they need for eternal life.

B. Finally in verses 57 and 58, Jesus says, <sup>57</sup> **Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."** (NIV)

B. The people in Russia had substandard medical care. Without help they faced death. But you and I are worse off. We are blind, and sinful, and we are dying because of our sin.

1. But, for people who are blind because of Sin, Jesus came to give his very self. He came to die so we can be forgiven.

2. And, for people who face death, Jesus came to give life. When He rose, He offers eternal life to all who believe. He will raise us up on the last day!

C. We may want health, or money, or acceptance. But those things all pass away with our lives in this world.

1. Jesus offers us eternal life in heaven, when He offers Himself.

2. Jesus offers real health of body, soul, and spirit in this life.

3. He gives us what we need, not what we want.

III. The people of Jesus' time were amazed at Jesus' words. They couldn't understand how He was what they needed. They couldn't understand How Jesus could give His body and blood. It was beyond their understanding, a mystery.

A. Please listen again to what Jesus is saying,

1. In verse 54 He says, <sup>54</sup> **Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.** Jesus calls

2. Now, this is a mystery. No wonder they asked, **"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"**

B. Let me share a mystery with you.

1. Today God acts in a way that is beyond our understanding to give . . . His Son Jesus.
2. In the Lord's Supper, in the bread, we receive the body of Jesus, Jesus Himself. We may not understand how Jesus does this. For people who are doomed in this world, this mysterious sacrament may not be what we would ask God for, but it is just what we need.
3. In the Lord's Supper, in the wine, we receive the blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. It might not be what we pray for in our dark moments. We may not understand how Jesus does this. But Jesus is God, and this is just what we need.

CONCLUSION - Any parent has struggled with getting their children to eat the food that is good for them, rather than what they want. Have you ever thought that God struggles the same way with us? Have you ever thought how great a gift God gives in Jesus, and in the Lord's supper?

As you come to worship today you may think you have all sorts of needs, and prayers. But, what you really need, for your eternal welfare, is the love of God in Jesus. Today, in our worship God offers you Jesus. Today, in the Lord's Supper, God offers you Jesus. Come and receive love, and forgiveness and eternal life.