**A Bread Trail to Jesus**

Based on [John 6:22-35](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn6.22-3)

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Pentecost 10

By Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Text for todays sermon is taken from John 6…

It’s summertime. Trees are green, grass is green, usually brown by now. Highways are lousy with motorhomes and travel trailers. And you can’t miss all of the garage sale signs. Going garage saleing is a fun summer activity…some people live for it. Early birds line up at the bigger multi-family sales waiting for them to open so they can have the first crack at whatever hidden gems might be mined there. People who go to garage sales are interested in bargains; but in order to find a bargain, you gotta have some sense of what stuff is worth.

I had a friend once who told me a story. His neighbor had a couch sitting in his front lawn with a sign that read “free” on it. Sat there for weeks. It was a decent enough couch, but any couch sitting in a front lawn is an eyesore. Finally the neighbor thought, what the heck, I’ll put a $20 dollar sign on it, maybe then someone will take it. He put the sign on it, and he was right, someone did take it. In fact that very night somebody stole it.

So Ladies and Gentlmen, how do we measure value? How do we know what something is really worth? Was the free couch really worth more with a $20 sign on it? Do you get what you pay for, or what you put into it? Or is value like an auction, where value is decided by the highest bidder? Is “fair market value” or “the going rate” the best way to judge a bargain? Scarcity determines value. Years ago purple was the color of royalty because purple dye was hard to come by, only rich people could afford it. Or is value simply in the eye of the beholder?

Maybe the best way we determine value or worth is what motivates us, gets us up and moving. A man might not like his job, but if I he needs to to put in 60 hours a week to pay off that line of credit, his butts a moving. Maybe a guy doesn’t feel like smiling, so he makes his wife and kids put up with a sourpuss, but an hour later if he need to impress a client or make a sale, then putting on a patronizing smile is worth it.

There was something that got the crowds up and moving to follow Jesus, and we hear about it in our Gospel lesson. Something that got their butts out of bed and moving to seek and find him. Jesus fed over 5000 hungry people with miraculously multiplied bread, call it “Wonder Bread,” and after that, they followed Jesus like he was the golden goose. Jesus saw what was in their hearts, why they were following him, and he answered them, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves**.” In other word, you follow me, not for your health, but for your appetite.

When I was a vicar on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, I led a worship service Sunday evenings at 7pm. You know how Jesus says where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am among them…we put that to the test. Attendance wasn’t always that great there, but for one day a month, the church was standing room only. Every month, the Last Service of the month was always a “handout service.” After the service we would hand out free groceries to anyone who attended service and wanted them. This was a small church in a small town of maybe 200 people. Average church attendance was maybe 10 people, but on the Last Sunday, average attendance shot up to about 50.

Friends, what I just told you is a racial stereotype I have. I am racist, but not towards Native Americans. I am racist towards the human race, as is anyone who believes in original sin. People of every nation, clan and tribe are drawn to what attracts them, just as Adam and Eve were drawn to the fruit that was so pleasing to the eye, yet forbidden by God. Human beings find it easier to follow their bellies and their hearts and their interests before following their God.

Now I’m not judging. A Judgment is an opinion, Sin is a fact. And people are more inclined to worship their God when it fits their agenda or feeds their bellies. That’s what Jesus is saying here, “**You follow me because I gave you bread and you had your fill**.” Now I don’t think Jesus is criticizing them for seeking after the bread he gives them. Everybody needs to eat. Jesus is saying, you like my bread, well this bread perishes, but I am the bread of life. And so Jesus, in giving them their daily bread, leaves them a **bread trail, a trail of bread** leading straight to him.

And he is not judging them. He’s pointing out a fact…that before he was known for feeding bellies and healing hemorrhages he had to go and pluck disciples from the seashore. Now that he has a reputation for doing amazing things and supplying an endless smorgasbord of food, he says, don’t be ignorant, but realize what you’re doing. “**You want to eat this earthly bread fine, you can have it. This stuff has little worth really, it won’t last and I don’t grudge giving it to you. But don’t delude yourselves. Your legs may be following me, but your for now hearts are following your bellies. You are following your own wants and desires. Seek the bread from heaven, and you will following me, for I am the Bread of Life.”**

Worship is worth-ship…the state of showing worth. Martin Luther once said that everybody worships. What you worship is what you turn to when you’re in distress, or where you expect good things to come from. That’s what you find worthy. That can be a bottle of booze, a video game, a party with friends, or it can be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Whichever one you turn to in distress is your god.

There’s a small island in Micronesia, the island of Yap, and it’s often mentioned in economics courses because of its strange form of currency known as Rai Stones. These are huge wheel shaped limestone stones up to 12 feet in diameter. The people of Yap used these huge stones as money…I’d imagine for big purchases only. The island has no native limestone, so they Yapese had to sail to a Neighboring island to find them, carry them onto a boat and sail them back home. So how was the value of these stones determined? It wasn’t the weight or the height that determined its value. Gathering these stones and sailing them on the ocean back to Yap was very dangerous…and the value was determined by how perilous was the journey to get them---how many lives were lost in retrieving them.

If that is the way that value is measured, friends than you are blessed, because God has considered us worthy by faith. Look at the lilies of the field…they don’t work, they don’t shop at Giorgio Armani, and yet they’re dressed better than Hollywood. And if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he look after you, O you of little faith…

So often we treat God like he was a couch in the lawn with a “free grace” sign on him. Repent, and then rejoice. For, like Rai stones, our value is determined by the life that was lost in retrieving us. We were lost in your sin and trespasses, and as we continue to follow our bellies, we worry about tomorrow and forget eternity. But we were made to belong to God. And so we lift up our heads, because God sees the sanctity of our life. You are worth so much to him, that he sent his only begotten Son whose life was lost in retrieving you. And as we pray for our daily bread remember, that the things that get you by in this life are really a trail of breadcrumbs that lead you to the loaf in heaven…to Christ who is the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to Him will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Him will never thirst.