

I love food. Early in our marriage Sue was repeatedly frustrated because before we would sit down for lunch I would ask her what we were having for supper. At supper I think of the snack I ~~have~~ will have before bedtime, or of the next day's lunch. (Not about breakfast, I'm not much of a fan of breakfast.) Food. I can never get enough of it. It's not a matter of hunger, it's a matter of loving to eat.

It's the same way with power. Give me authority over two people and I want authority over four. Let me provide leadership in a club and soon I want to be the boss over the whole town or county. If I could have my way I would be ~~the~~ in charge of the whole country, the whole world. Of ~~the~~ power I never have enough.

I suspect it would be the same way in me were I able to do miracles. If I could heal diseases or straighten crooked backs I suspect I would become puffed up by these gifts just as food or power puff me up. Like the addict more would be ~~the~~ need. More and more, always more needed to satisfy until the food or power or miracle destroys me.

If you are the Son of God, said Satan, Command this stone to become bread. How often temptatinn begins this way, not with the offering of some evil thing, but the invitation to seek a good gift of God. I save money ~~if~~ for a good reason, for my children to have the opportunity to go to college. And after that I will save that Sue and I might have a place to live after ~~w~~ I retire. ~~You work hard to get enough money to farm, and if possible that your children may farm after you.~~

But we have all seen where it can lead. A man begins to believe that the size of his bank account, the size of his holdings make him somehow better than his poor neighbor. Deep down in his heart he begins to <sup>praise</sup> ~~talk to~~ himself <sup>for</sup> ~~about~~ wealth. God's good gift of bread, daily bread, which Christ himself taught us to pray, turns into an evil chaining the soul of a man.

Or his wife wants only a cozy home, appliances that work. But the comments of admiration from the neighbors act like a drug. Soon she is obsessed with

the best and the newest and the most expensive. Instead of her managing the house, the house manages her, enslaves her.

Or maybe she began with a concern for <sup>a better means to the purpose.</sup> ~~better schools.~~ So she ran for the <sup>part</sup> ~~school~~ board. And won. And made a difference for the <sup>community</sup> ~~schools.~~ She began doing a god pleasing thing for the community, but power changed her. Gradually not the community but her needs for power motivated her more and more.

Or he began with the earnest prayer for healing. A friend was in need. Humbly, devoutly he prayed, laying his hand on his forehead and power from God reached down through him and there was healing. A good gift from God. And then a second time God used him to bring healing. Again and again. And people noticed, crowds gathered and more and more the glory sented on the healer. The sick, the broken, they became his tools. The goodness and the love in which it had begun was lost.

Make a stone into bread, Jesus. Worship me and I will give you all power, Jesus. Jump off the temple and show me what God can do, Jesus. It is that temptation that is never that simple for you and it is Satan and disguised. The will of God is clear.

Yes, Jesus could have chosen bread or power or miracles for himself and his followers. He could have chosen the very things we so think we need, that trap us and enslave us and control us. But Jesus knew that we need something else far more than bread or power or miracles. And that something more is to be right with God.

For all our food, our overabundance ~~is~~ of bread, how little peace with God there is in us. Anxiety, fear, depression, these are the companions of the wealthiest nation on the earth.

And though we work medical miracles, and live longer and longer, so often the living longer is not living better. Afraid of what tomorrow will bring, life itself can become a prison.

For Jesus to choose what he did was not the easy way. It was not easier for him to reconcile us to God through dying on the cross. It was not

a downhill path to be betrayed and abandoned yet these went with Jesus being faithful to God.

Nor is following Christ the easy way for us. Choosing him over bread and power and miracles will mean that our pride will suffer and be put to death again and again. Our family and children may suffer as we seek God's will and way through this world. It is a lonely road on which sometimes it seems our only companion is our Lord who has walked it before us. As Jesus said, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his ~~own~~ life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake and will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?

But in the end, when the bread has all molded and rulers rule over piles of bones, and the crowds have long since stopped cheering for the circus of miracles, then those who have chosen to follow Christ on the narrow way will not be disappointed. In the end they shall be with him whom they have most loved and sought, and will hear him say, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

Hymn 306 - verses 1, 2, 5