

# No Free Lunch?

Isaiah 55:1-5 & Matthew 14:13-21

## Introduction

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, American bartenders offered **free lunches** to drinkers. Of course, this kept them in the bar longer, ordering more drinks, so they ended up paying for the food in the long run. In 1942, a political journalist said, “There’s **NO FREE LUNCH.**” This phrase was made popular in Robert Heinlein’s 1966 novel *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, then more popular still by economist Milton Friedman’s book *There’s No Such Thing as a Free Lunch*. Yet, Isaiah offers a free meal and Jesus provides a free dinner for a group of over 15,000 people. Today, we look at this free meal.

## What Kind of Food Is This?

Food is life. God is calling us to His **banquet** table here. That would make this meal **salvation**. Let’s see what it looks like when we compare the food of salvation to earthly food.

### Free

*Come, buy ... without money and without price.* It almost seems too good to be true. What food and drink are free? We know that *everything has a price.* And with the shortages we have right now, the prices on all foods are going up. But this is **free**. It costs nothing because the price has **already been paid** by Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. It’s a gift of **grace**.

### Satisfies

Another thing about this food, is that it **satisfies**. According to **verse 2**, people are *spending money on that which is not bread, and their labor for that which does not satisfy*. We eat and a short time later, we’re hungry again. The things of this world, the things we work so hard to get, don’t satisfy. Another saying that fails is “if it’s worth having, it’s worth working for.” We think the harder we must work for something, the more satisfying it will be. The free gift of salvation is the only “food” that really satisfies.

## New Testament Connections

We also see connections with things we learn about salvation in the **New Testament** in this reading.

### “Living Water”

*Come, everyone who thirsts* reminds us of Jesus’ words on the last day of the FEAST OF BOOTHS in **John 7** (read **John 7:37-39**). Technically, **living water** is running water that will never run dry. There is no fear of being thirsty again.

### “Hunger and Thirst (for Righteousness)”

On the topic of thirsting, the fourth **BEATITUDE**, found in **Matthew 5**: says, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied*. We hunger and thirst for righteousness when we see our sins and are sorry for them. We recognize how **hungry** and **dry** we are

and long to be **satisfied**. The free food and living water of **salvation** are the only things that satisfy that hunger and thirst.

### “Everlasting (New) Covenant”

In **verse 3**, God says He will *make an everlasting covenant* with Israel. This points us to **Jeremiah 31** (read **Jeremiah 31:31-34**). This is the **NEW COVENANT** sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the everlasting **COVENANT** He speaks about here.

### “Come and Buy”

There’s **NO FREE LUNCH** means that everything has a **price**, and someone must pay it. We said the price was **paid in full** by Jesus. Yet, the prophet tells us to *come and buy*. Put simply, to *come and buy without price* means to **receive it on faith**. What did the people have to do to be fed in the **Gospel** lesson today? They had to *sit down and eat*. I suppose they could have said, “I don’t believe this. It sounds too good to be true” and walked away to get their own food. But Jesus ordered them to sit down on the grass, then proceeded to feed them. We might think free forgiveness of sins sounds too good to be true also. And we might be tempted to try to earn our own salvation. But that won’t work. Jesus just wants us to **sit down on the grass and receive it by faith**.

### Means of Grace

Here, in the story of the feeding of the five thousand, notice Jesus’ actions in **verse 19** – *and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples*. Jesus **took, blessed, broke, and gave**. We see this pattern of action in the WORDS OF INSTITUTION for the **LORD’S SUPPER**. *Jesus took the bread and when He had given thanks (blessed it), He broke it and gave it to the disciples* ... here is the meal of salvation God offers us. The **body** and **blood** of our **Lord** and **Savior**. He offers us this **FREE LUNCH** because He’s already paid the price. He says, “Come and buy without money. Eat and drink your fill at My table. Here is the **FREE LUNCH** that satisfies.”

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*May the peace of God,  
Which passes all understanding,  
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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