

The True Bread from Heaven

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[0:00] By mouth and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and redeemer. Amen.! Please be seated.

This morning we're back, we're not back, we're in John's Gospel. And it's on page 1059 of your Pew Bible, I believe, yes, 1059 of your Pew Bible.

So I encourage you, if you have your own Bible, open it. If you have a Pew Bible, grab one and open it and follow along as we look into this Gospel reading this morning. We are in the same scene in the Gospel narratives.

We might have changed books from Mark to John, but it's still the same story, the same narrative. It's just, we're just looking at it from John's perspective, John's telling of it.

If you remember from our last two Gospel readings, remember two weeks ago we read about the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 in Mark. Jesus fed 5,000.

[1:13] And by the way, when you read that 5,000, it's probably triple or quadruple that number because it only counted the men. And there will be women and children and even youths underage.

It's only men of a certain age that are counted. So it counted 5,000 men. So you can imagine how many people were there. And so Jesus miraculously fed this multitude, thousands, with five loaves and two fishes.

That's what we said. And then last week we saw Jesus walking on water. And last week it was the response of this miracle that Mark highlighted for us in his Gospel.

Particularly the disciples' response to the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 and then seeing him walk on water. And their response wasn't a good one, at least according to Mark's telling of it.

Because Mark, in Mark 6, verse 52, he told us that they didn't understand about the loaves. And then that their hearts were hardened.

[2:22] What were they meant to understand about the loaves that they didn't understand? Well, they were meant to remember our first reading this morning, the Exodus 16 passage that we read earlier.

They were meant to remember how God fed his people in the wilderness with manna from heaven in the morning. And quail, meat, meat in the form of quail in the evening.

That's what they're meant to remember through that miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. They're meant to remember that God sustained Israel throughout their pilgrimage in the wilderness. So that when they saw Jesus likewise feed a multitude of people in the desert, in the wilderness, they were meant to think, wait a minute.

God fed our forefathers miraculously. This man, Jesus Christ, is doing the same thing. Hmm. Hmm. I wonder.

I wonder if he's God. But they didn't think that. They were not thinking that. Instead, we're told they didn't understand. And they were further hardening their hearts from understanding the truth about Jesus.

[3:41] And that's a troubling place to be, as we saw last week. It's a troubling place to have a hardened heart and to remain hardened against Jesus.

Against who he is, concerning his person and his works. And so that's what we looked at last week. The disciples, the 12 disciples' response, reaction to what happened.

But this week, in this gospel reading, we come to John 6, and we're looking at the crowd's response to this same miracle of the feeding of the 5,000.

And so, we jumped in, in verse 22, on John chapter 6. The next day, the day after the miracle, on the next day, the crowd who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there.

And that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

[4:46] So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. The crowd, they saw what happened the evening before, when Jesus sent the 12 ahead of him in the boat.

And then he dismissed the crowd. They saw that Jesus did not get on the boat. And so, the next day, they gathered again. Why would they gather again? Well, if I know somebody that can feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes, I would want to sack him up and really want to be around him every time.

Right? And that's why they gathered. They want to be near Jesus. This guy, we don't have to go ever hungry again. And so, they gathered. Remember also, Mark's telling and John's telling of this account, they wanted to make Jesus, they really tried to make Jesus king by force.

And Jesus refused them. And so, they are seeking after Jesus. And so, they gathered the next day. They knew Jesus didn't go with the disciples. So, they're looking for him.

But they couldn't find him. And so, they couldn't find him. So, they decided then, well, maybe we don't know. Let's just find his disciples. Because eventually, if we find his disciples, we're going to find him.

[6:06] Or he's going to find them. Or we can ask his disciples about him and our plans for making him king. Whatever their plans are. They had a plan. They're looking for Jesus. They're seeking him out. So, they went in these boats that have gathered on the other side from Tiber.

More people have heard about what happened. More boats have gathered. And so, you can imagine there's a crowd of people. It's like a martyr of boats. Fishing boats and leisure boats, whatever.

Going across the sea. Full of people. Looking for Jesus. And so, they crossed in their boats. And then, they expected to see just the disciples.

But to their puzzlement and delight, I'm sure. They saw Jesus also. On the other side of the sea. Of Galilee. And that's why they said, Rabbi, when did you come here?

Because they don't know about Jesus walking on water. Only the disciples were witness to that.

And so, they were amazed. And where did you get here? When? How? But, Jesus didn't care about that question.

[7:11] Because he knows why they're looking for him. And so, he said to them. Truly, truly, I say to you. You are seeking me. Not because you saw signs.

But because you ate your fill of loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes. But the food that endures to eternal life. Which the Son of Man will give to you.

For on him, God the Father has set his seal. I know why you're here. You're not looking for me, really.

You're looking for to fill your bellies. This is the way of false disciples. They come with the crowd. And they clamor for miracles and supernatural experiences.

False disciples think only of earthly benefits. We saw that the day before. They tried to force Jesus to become their king. So he could feed them permanently.

[8:10] They have no desire for true worship. That's not on their agenda. They don't see Jesus as he truly is. The Messiah. The Messiah of God.

They'll come for what is called worship. That's why they're coming. Called worship. But they might even like the liturgy. The music. The organ or the guitar.

But it's not true worship that these false disciples are coming for. Because from the heart. It's not the true worship that comes from the heart. Through the mind. According to the scripture. Directed to the glory of God.

That's not the kind of worship they've come for. The characteristic of false disciples. Is to seek personal earthly gain. That's the characteristic of false disciples.

And we saw that. We saw that because the whole crowd followed Jesus. To get the next meal.

Most of them. If not all of them. And we're going to be in John 6 for the next three weeks.

[9:08] We're going to see that all of them are false disciples. Because at the end of chapter 6. They all lack Jesus. But false disciples. Seek temporal.

Things. Things of this earth. That's the thing that attracts them. That's what attracted them by Jesus. They want earthly goods. They want their bellies.

And their felt needs to be met. But Jesus admonishes them. He admonishes them. To turn their focus. From temporal pursuits. To turn it to that which can truly satisfy them.

That only he can give. In telling them not to focus on food that spoils. Jesus rebukes their materialistic notions of the kingdom.

The food Jesus gave them the day before was perishable. It's always going to spoil. It will either spoil because it is left un-eaten.

[10 : 13] Or eventually spoil in their stomach. But Jesus here offers them imperishable food. The kind of food that will nourish them forever.

Food that endures to eternal life Jesus says. And which only Jesus himself can give. Don't seek for the things that will only satisfy your earthly appetite.

And will leave you wanting for more. All these things that the world offers. Food for the stomach.

Status. In the case of the disciples. They want status.

Political victory. In the case of the crowd. They wanted him to make him their king. Military victory. To defeat the Romans. Economic success.

All these things are not necessarily bad in themselves. Actually many of these people were probably really hungry. They needed food. But Jesus saw a greater need and a deeper need.

[11 : 12] And he's saying come to me for that. Because I can give you that which is greater than all these other things. These other trinkets that you're just looking for.

And it is true isn't it? That many come to church seeking a Jesus. That will grant all these earthly wishes. Many have fallen even into the trap of the charlatans.

Claiming to be preachers of the gospel. But all they want is to offer you preaching material solutions. To your spiritual problem. I don't need to name them.

Some of them probably comes to your head. But Jesus is saying come for that which no one else will I can give. And again it's not that they don't have pressing needs.

Right? We see that also today don't we? Many, many among us, many in the world need healing. Emotional and physical healing. Or financial victories.

[12 : 16] Yet Jesus recognizes that we have a far greater need than any of that. So he says to them don't labor for just earthly needs. That will perish.

And you with it. Don't labor for that. He says to them your greatest need is being saved from God's condemnation. From God's wrath.

That's your greatest need. Your greatest need is to be brought into his family as his new creation. You need deliverance into the hawk of safety.

And out of this broken world destined for destruction. Do you recognize that brothers and sisters? That that is our greatest need? If you found that, do you recognize that your greatest need has been met?

If you don't have it, do you recognize that only in Jesus can that need be met? So Jesus turns the attention back to himself as he tells them this. And that's where the focus should always be, isn't it?

[13 : 14] It should always be on Jesus. Not on the things, the material goods he can give. But on him himself. He's the treasure. And so Jesus turned the focus back to himself.

And every true disciple should have Jesus as the focus. Jesus, of course, cared for them. Right? That's why he fed them the day before.

He cared for them. He cared for the poor. That's why he healed many and provided food. He cared for the sick. That's why he healed many that were lame. And he cared for the oppressed.

That's why he delivered many that were demon-possessed. And Jesus also wants his church to care about those things. For the sick, the poor, and the oppressed.

But Jesus wants us to see that the primary and fundamental need of every human soul, beyond all of those other things, is to be restored to right standing before God.

[14 : 13] And the only way that can happen is through faith in him, whom the Father has set a seal on. And so, again, I want to remind you, Holy Trinity, what is our proclamation?

Why do we want people to come to our church? Why do we invite them? Is it so that they can have a really nice potluck? We do a great potluck, if I might say so. But that's really not why we want people to come.

I mean, that might be a great thing to invite them to a potluck Sunday. But the end goal, what is it, brothers and sisters? Is that they may hear the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings them out of death into eternal life.

That's their greatest need. That's our greatest need. So let's pause for a moment and ask ourselves, which Jesus are we following? And which Jesus are we inviting people to follow? Is it the social Jesus? Are we inviting people to come to our church so that they can have a social group that they can be part of? I mean, those are the side benefits of being part of the family of God. But that's not the main thing.

[15 : 15] Is it the relational Jesus? Someone's lonely and we want them to have sort of people to relate with? A few years ago, when I first became a rapture here, a lady came and joined us.

And she said she's no longer here, so you don't have to look around. She came and joined us and she said, I'm looking for a church because I'm just realizing that I'm getting old and I work a lot and I don't have a lot of friends.

And I want to have a community that as I get old, people will know me and I'll know them. And that's a very valid reason. That's a very good reason to join any group, especially a church.

A church is a place that will provide that. But as you were saying that, I was thinking to myself, that's not the first-order reason for you to join, to be looking for a church.

And I prayed for her, and I'm still praying for her. You might join me in praying for her. God knows where she is, so you can pray. Because she eventually looked for that that she's seeking somewhere else.

[16 : 25] She's no longer part of her. She came for a few weeks. She's still looking for relationship elsewhere. Because she's not looking for Jesus for Jesus' sake. She's looking for Him for other side reasons.

So is that the kind of Jesus we preach? Or we invite people to relational Jesus, social Jesus? Or is it the political Jesus? If you have my political views, you can come to my church.

If you don't, I don't know. Go to the church down the street. I know that none of you feel that way, or think that way, and I'm grateful for that.

But again, that's not why we gather as the people of God. It's not so that we can all have, you know, the same mindset, political viewpoint. It is so that people can come to meet this Jesus, through whom they can have life.

So after pausing, and really examining ourselves, what kind of Jesus am I following? What kind of Jesus am I inviting people to follow? Let's look at verse 28, as Jesus continues.

[17 : 31] As the crowd continues, Jesus already said to them, come to me for that which only I can give. And so they said to him in verse 28, what must we do to be doing the works of God?

It's a really strange question for them to ask after Jesus has just said what He said. They immediately asked Jesus, what work they must do to earn this limitless food that they heard that He has.

Because He just sold them. I have food that endures eternal life. So rightly, this is the religion, the man's religion thinking.

What can I do? What must I do to earn that? What work? And do you see how that question betrays them and their hearts?

Because what they're asking is, what do I have to do to get what you're offering? Just tell me the hoops. I must jump through. How many there are? Their whole attention is on the steps to gaining what their hearts desire.

[18 : 38] just tell me what I have to do to get my three wishes. They're treating Jesus as a genie in a bottle. Jesus, the source of eternal life, stands right before them and they're clamoring for what will fill their bellies.

And so Jesus answered them, this is the work of God. This is the work of God. That you believe in Him whom He has sent. Just believe.

Place your trust in Him whom God sent. This is not a work-based religion of the world. You don't have to do penance.

You don't have to watch your carbon footprint. You don't have to go on a pilgrimage. You don't have to give money to the church. The only work required of you is faith.

Believe. The kind of belief that lays old on that which the Son of Man gives by grace. That's all that's required.

[19:52] But they still don't get it. Look in verse 30. So they said to Him, Well, okay, then what sign do you do that we may see and believe? You said believe.

So what sign do you do that we may see and believe? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. Will I have you know Jesus as it is written?

He gave them bread from heaven to eat. That's the kind of sign that we've seen in our history. So what do you have to offer? To show that they're not seeking Jesus as the object of their trust, object of their faith.

Again, Jesus is saying, Look to me. And what are they doing? They increasingly pivot to themselves and what they must do to attain that which they want.

They're looking for temporal comforts when Jesus has eternal blessings for them. And so they say, Okay, Jesus, if you want us to believe you are the sent one of God, what can you do to prove it?

[20:55] Moses, by the way, gave us manna in the wilderness. You say you can give us food that doesn't perish. But all you've done is just fed over 1,000 people with five loaves and two fishes.

And we're still hungry. What else have you got? Tragically, asking for more signs was and still is the slogan of those whose hearts are hardened against God.

Remember that it's not just the crowd that were asking for more signs. Later in the Gospels, you will see who was constantly asking for signs. The Pharisees, the leaders of the people, the leaders in the temple, the scribes and the Pharisees are the ones constantly asking Jesus to do more signs. When they've seen ample signs. In fact, they ask him for more signs after they've seen and heard of Lazarus. Being resurrected after three days dead in the grave.

And that's the sign of those whose hearts are hardened against God. It's always asking more signs, more signs. That's exactly the character of unbelief.

[22:06] When you approach God looking for signs and wonders and it's a never-ending thing. And the natural man cannot be convinced of any things in terms of signs and wonders.

Signs and wonders is not what will save or can save. If we can't trust by simple faith in Jesus Christ and his finished work, all the signs and wonders in the world aren't going to convince us.

So the Lord said, believe. They said, show us a sign. The Lord said, have faith. And they said, do more tricks. The one of circus Jesus.

The Jesus, this Jesus shows that miracles don't save. Well, this in fact shows us, doesn't it, that miracles don't save. If you ever read the Gospels and see all the things that Jesus did and finally at the end of his life there's still all of Israel, all of Jerusalem, yeah, crucify him.

This should be proof to us that miracles cannot and do not save. Or look at Israel. All they saw from the deliverance from Egypt all the way to the promised land.

[23:33] And yet, they didn't have trust in God. And here are these folks. They've just witnessed this great miracle of Jesus feeding thousands of people and they're asking for more signs.

But Jesus won't do it. Instead, Jesus said to them, truly, truly I say to you, if it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Jesus showed them that they didn't understand what actually happened in Exodus 16. Because it wasn't Moses, it was God who provided for them.

And it wasn't merely just to provide bread and meat for them, for their bellies, but it's in fact to show them that they could put their trust in him. That's why Jesus, and that's why God provided for them in the wilderness.

To show them that he is their salvation, their sure deliverer, as he has shown them from time to time. And so Jesus goes on to correct their wrong historical thinking.

[24:42] Firstly, Moses didn't give you the bread. It was God who provided it. Moses was only a supervisor, a store manager, who told you when and out you must gather that which God has given.

Secondly, the bread didn't come from heaven. That's not the true, that manna that came, it's not the true bread from heaven. That's not the one I'm talking about. My Father gives you the true bread, and I am that true bread.

Incidentally, if you remember Exodus, the bread that they ate in the wilderness only lasted a day before it spoiled, except on the Sabbath day when it was a two-day supply.

So, Moses' bread, as they would call it, as the crowd says, was not permanent. Moses' bread couldn't give life. And remember, of course, that most of the people who ate the manna in the wilderness eventually perished in the wilderness, didn't they?

Because of their unbelief. Manna didn't keep them alive. It can't be the true bread. The true bread that comes from heaven and gives life is Jesus Christ.

[25 : 57] Christ. So, Jesus destroys the argument and he says, thirdly, that Moses gave you only physical nourishment. The true bread you're looking for, that you should be seeking, is spiritual.

That's the bread that gives life. It's the bread that keeps you alive and keeps death away, spiritual death away. And finally, Jesus says to them, this manna that I'm given is not just for you, Israel, but it's for the whole world.

The true bread is for every man of every age and every place all over the world that comes to Jesus by faith. Christ again and again and again claims to proceed directly from God.

And so Christ in his reply is really saying to them, I am the one come from God bringing the bread of life that gives eternal soul satisfaction. And so, let's look in the last two verses.

So, here's that final response at least in the verses we have this morning. They finally said to him, after all that Jesus has said, all the teaching he's given them, so they finally said to him, Sir, give us this bread always.

[27 : 16] And at this point you might be wondering have they gotten it? Jesus in verse 35 said to them, I am the bread of life. So, so they really now wonder, they realize this person is the one that can give us whatever this thing he's talking about.

Sounds really good. Let's ask him to give it to us. So Jesus explicitly, explicitly now tells them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Now, we don't know if they got it. We'll look at it next week. It's to be continued. There's more that Jesus has to say about this, about him bringing the bread of life.

But let's briefly think again about the Israelites in the wilderness who had manna. What was the manna? Why did God give them every morning provisions for them?

So that as they sojourned through the wilderness for 40 years, they never lacked. Why did God do that? It was meant to show them that God was the one who could provide all that they need.

[28 : 32] And they failed to see that, didn't they? They failed to turn to God and to trust him that he will indeed provide all that they need.

We know of their many grumbings and lack of faith. And here is this crowd again like their forefathers. They failed to see who their redeemer really is.

Like their forefathers, they failed to see that God was the one, not Moses, who provided their daily bread and who sustained them. I hope you wouldn't fail in the way they failed.

I hope that you will see this morning Jesus, the bread of life, and you will come to him. I hope that you will ask him to help you with your unbelief on your hardened hearts.

unbelief. We saw last week that we're not removed from that. If the twelve disciples can have hardened hearts, it's something that we ourselves are susceptible to.

[29 : 43] And where do we go when we have such things? Who do we turn to? Jesus Christ.

Christ. So if you have unbelief, you have hardened hearts, come to him. Ask him to help you with your unbelief.

Ask him to give you the ability to see God and seek him rightly. don't be like the crowd, chasing after Jesus for political clout, looking for Jesus for a king to defeat the Romans.

And like the Romans, they want a ruler who would give them bread and surfaces, a king who can feed them and do signs on demand. That's what they wanted. But that's not the real Jesus.

So what Jesus are you seeking? If you're chasing him for earthly goods, it will not satisfy. If you're chasing after a Jesus that performs just mere signs and wonders, the Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland Jesus, who makes outlandish claims and miracles, and then dupes people, that's not the real Jesus.

The Jesus that is given to us in the pages of scriptures is the Jesus that calls us to come to him, repent of our sins, turn away from ourselves and turn to him.

[31 : 07] Knowing you are a sinner under God's wrath, will you today believe that Christ Jesus, through his person and work, can save you? If you know that he can save you, then you can have this bread of life.

And you can have it, the bread of life, by which you will never hunger or thirst anymore. let's pray. Lord, we acknowledge that there is so much in this world that moves out, even for those of us who are believers in Jesus, who have come to you and trust our lives to you.

There is so much things that this world offers, trinkets of the world, that can never satisfy, that we are sometimes tempted to follow after, to seek after.

Help us, Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to never lose sight of Jesus as our greatest treasure, to seek him above all things. If there are any here who do not yet know this great treasure, pray, Lord, that Holy Spirit, that you will bring them to saving knowledge of you, through your word preached this morning.

[32 : 25] Thank you, Lord, that you feed us, you sustain us, both in your word and sacrament. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.