

Food for Life

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 00] Our gracious Father, we do thank you for your word, and we do ask again that you would help us to not only hear it, but also understand it and live in light of it. We ask it for the glory of your Son and your name. Amen.

Well, more than ever, it seems that our society is obsessed with so-called real food. For example, once upon a time, everyone was happy with this kind of coffee, International Roast, remember that one?

But now it has to be real coffee. Or even last year, late last year, there was a big stink over fake honey. So on the next slide, there was this scandal, they called it, because brands of honey, like the one on the next slide, was being mixed with syrup.

And so there was this big stink in the newspapers because people wanted real honey. Do you remember that one? Or even there's shows like MasterChef or My Kitchen Rules, which talk about real cooking and real food.

So much so that the other night, we just said Grace, and we're about to eat, and then our youngest said, wait, I've got to score mum's meal out of ten. My wife responded with one word, dessert.

[1 : 08] And they all gave it. And they all gave it 10 out of ten. The point is, more than ever, our society is obsessed with so-called real food. And I say so-called because this food only ever gives us limited life anyway, doesn't it?

That's why we have to keep eating it. But today, Jesus will tell us to actually get real, real food, if you like. Food that gives unlimited life.

And so it's a long passage. So I don't know why I gave Vijay the short ones and me the long ones, but anyway. So we're at point one in your outline of verse 22 in your Bibles. It says, And today's passage really follows hot on the heels of last week's passage.

It's the next day after Jesus had fed the 5,000 with bread and fish. Vijay brought in a whole lot of bread last week so we'd remember. And thankfully, he didn't bring in a whole lot of fish.

Otherwise, it could have been smelly. But he also summarized lots of connections with the Exodus, how God rescued Israel through Moses. And there's this connection being made with Jesus here.

[2 : 42] And the crowd, you might remember, got part of that connection. So do you remember verse 14, chapter 2, verse 14? They think Jesus is the prophet who was raised up to be like Moses, we saw in the Old Testament, whom God would send to speak to them and to rescue them again.

And so verse 15, chapter 6, verse 15, they try and make Jesus be their king, that he might rescue them from the Romans. And in fact, the Bible tells us that the Jews have tried to do this twice already before Jesus.

But the point is, they saw something of Jesus' identity, but now he's disappeared. Remember, he walked on the water at night. And so when the crowds wake up and don't see him there, they go in search of Jesus.

And then they find him teaching in a synagogue the next day. So we pick it up at verse 25. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, Rabbi, when did you get here?

Jesus answered, very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

[3 : 52] Now back in verse 2 of chapter 6, it says that the crowds were following Jesus because they saw the signs, the miracles. But Jesus says here, he's really pointing out that you're not really following me because of what the miracle pointed to, only because of what the miracle gave you, a full stomach.

You see, they're so focused on how Jesus can rescue them from their physical problems, whether it's physical sickness, verse 2, or a political power like the Romans in verse 15, or physical hunger

here in verse 26.

They're so focused on being rescued from their physical problems that they've missed their biggest problem, their problem of eternal judgment for sin.

I mean, you can't get a bigger problem than that. It's a bit like this next slide. This man is so focused on the engine, he's missed the bigger problem around him. It's like the people here.

They're so focused on their physical problems, they've missed the bigger one. And so Jesus tells them not to go for this kind of physical food, but get real food, which rescues you from eternal judgment and gives you instead eternal life.

[5 : 10] See verse 27? Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man, this life, the Son of Man will give you.

For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval. And they asked him, well, what must we do to do the works God requires? Jesus answered, the work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent.

Our food does spoil, doesn't it? It's why our food often has used by dates or best before dates.

Although someone pointed out to me this morning that honey doesn't actually ever spoil.

Okay, all right. But it never gives us unlimited life, does it? It only gives us limited life. And they say without food we can last about three weeks. Without water it's about three or four days.

But here Jesus says there is another type of food who has no use by date. Who gives unlimited life, eternal life. And the people are to work for that food.

[6 : 18] Now naturally the people think Jesus is talking about doing religious works to earn this life. But Jesus says there's actually only one work, singular. And it's to believe in Jesus.

For Jesus is the food who gives eternal life. So we're at point two now and verse 30. The passage is arranged around their questions.

Verse 30. Therefore they asked him, what sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness.

As it is written, like we heard in our first reading, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Here it seems that people understood they needed to believe in Jesus.

They get it. But now they want another sign to prove it. The irony of course, is they've just had one yesterday. The feeding of the 5,000.

[7 : 17] In fact, the bread, the miraculous bread is still digesting in their bellies. You see, with people, signs, it's never enough to believe.

People even today say, if God showed me a sign, then I would believe. But it's not true. The human heart is dead in sin, dead to God.

So as we'll see, God needs to revive our hearts and enable us to believe. As signs might provide proof, yes, but only God provides life.

Yet since the people talk about a sign like manna or bread from heaven, well, Jesus goes, well, okay then, verse 32, very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Sir, they excitedly say, always give us this bread. And then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life.

[8 : 28] Whoever comes to me will never go hungry. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and the signs and yet still you do not believe.

They want bread from heaven. And Jesus says, well, here I am, sent from heaven. Jesus is the bread from God who gives life with God.

But despite seeing the signs, they still do not believe. Yet did you notice for us who do believe, it says, verse 35, we will never hunger, never thirst.

We will always be full, if you like. Not physically, of course, but spiritually. We have full life with God now.

Spiritually. We have full access to Him as our Heavenly Father. We can pray anytime, anywhere. We have full spiritual blessings, the Bible tells us.

[9 : 31] And what's more, we have the guarantee of a full physical life later. on Judgment Day, where God will raise our bodies to enjoy the new creation in all its fullness.

And in case that's not enough, Jesus will even keep us until that day. See verse 37. All those the Father gives me come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of Him who sent me. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those He has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. You see the wonderful encouragement we have as Christians?

He will keep us trusting in Him. He will lose none of us the Father has given to Him. What an amazing assurance.

[10:41] We have no other religion in the world gives us that. And it's all by believing in Jesus, the bread of life from heaven. But all this is just too much for the people to believe.

And so verse 41. At this the Jews there began to grumble about Him because He said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They said, Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

How can He now say, I came down from heaven? See what they're saying? We know this guy. He's not from heaven. He's from Joseph down the road. Interestingly, in here, verse 41, for the first time in this chapter, John calls these people the Jews, which in John's gospel is not a good sign.

They are like the Jews from our first reading who grumbled in the desert, do you remember?

Because God did not meet their expectations. Well, here now, these Jews grumble because Jesus does not meet their expectations either.

They expected Him to be the son of Joseph. Perhaps the prophet promised by God who might provide for their physical needs, but the son of God from heaven?

[11:57] Come on. Provides eternal life? Really? And so they grumble. But we can grumble too, can't we? And find things difficult to accept.

And when God doesn't meet our expectations or answer our prayers with what we want and when we want it. Or even when God doesn't operate the way we want, we can grumble.

See verse 43? Stop grumbling amongst yourselves, Jesus answered. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them and I'll raise them up at the last day.

As it is written in the prophets, they will all be taught by God. See what Jesus says here? No one can come to Him. No one can believe in Him unless God first teaches them, draws them, enables them.

This is the doctrine of election or that naughty word that no one likes to talk about, predestination. And you'll thankfully know that we don't have time to unpack it now.

[13:03] But it is peppered throughout our passage. verse 37, 39, God gives people to Jesus. Here in verse 44, God draws people to Jesus.

Verse 65, God has not enabled them to believe in Jesus. And in verse 70, as we'll see, the 12 do believe because He has chosen them.

This teaching is throughout the passage, but it raises all sorts of questions for us, doesn't it? What about our free will, our choice? What about my loved ones who don't yet believe?

And so on. Now the Bible does give us lots of answers, like the fact that our hearts are spiritually dead to God, so of course God needs to first revive our hearts, you know, put those defibrillator paddles on, one, two, three, clear, kick start them so we can believe in Jesus.

What's more, the Bible also tells us we don't know what God has planned for our loved ones, so we ought to keep praying for them and that God might raise up Christians around them.

[14:11] In fact, a member of our church had been praying for her husband for almost 60 years. He became a Christian last year at age 97. But there are other things the Bible doesn't answer, like, why did God wait so long?

When God doesn't operate according to our expectations, we can either grumble like the Jews or we can remember all the evidence we do have. We can keep praying for those who don't yet believe, prayer night, this Wednesday night, and we can gratefully thank God for enabling us to believe.

Because for us who believe, we will live forever. See verse 47? Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes has now eternal life, spiritually.

I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

[15:25] Jesus couldn't be clearer. He's repeating himself, isn't he? He is the bread from heaven who gives eternal life. But he does start to push the metaphor, doesn't he?

He now says, we who eat him live forever. Now, just to be clear, he's not promoting cannibalism, is he? He's just simply extending the bread metaphor.

To eat means to believe. It means he said believe all the way through the passage, even here in verse 47. But Jesus pushes the metaphor because he wants to push the people to make a choice. Because we do have a real choice. He wants them to choose whether they will really believe in him or not. And not just in him, but in his death for them.

For it's by his death that we can have life. And that's what he's just said at the end of verse 51. This bread is my flesh, my body, which I give at the cross for the life of the world.

[16:31] And it's his death that he now focuses on, which brings us to point three and verse 52, their next question. Then the Jews began to argue sharply amongst themselves, how can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Jesus said to them, very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. Now, Jesus talking about his flesh and blood is clearly talking about his sacrificial death on the cross, but he really, again, pushes the metaphor even further, doesn't he?

He got eating and drinking now. But just to be clear, he's talking about believing. Some people think that it's actually talking about the Lord's Supper, and so some churches say that when we eat the bread and drink the cup, we're literally eating Jesus' flesh and literally drinking his blood, and they say, oh, it's John 6.

No, that's not what John 6 is talking about. Remember, to believe, sorry, to eat means to believe. The Lord's Supper, in fact, is about remembering and believing afresh in Christ's death for us.

[17:56] For this is how he brings life to us. And so both these verses and the Lord's Supper are about believing in his death for us. For as Jesus died, he willingly took the eternal judgment for our sins so that we could be rescued from it and given life eternal instead.

Back in 2007, a 21-year-old Melbourne girl called Kimberly Deer on the slide, on the next slide I think is a picture of her, went skydiving in the US her first time.

Moments after takeoff, the engine burst into flames and the plane nosedived. Without thinking, her instructor, a guy called Rob, pulled her close, said it would be okay, and then swiveled himself under Kimberly's body so that his body took the brunt of the impact.

It took just 16 seconds from engine failure to crash. Robert Cook died, but Kimberly Deer survived. Rob gave his life for hers, you see.

Now, of course, neither Kim nor Rob deserved to die, but we actually deserve eternal judgment for our sin, which is much more serious than we often realize.

[19:07] yet Jesus took the impact for us in our place like Rob. He took our eternal judgment in one massive hit at the cross so that we could be rescued from it and given life eternal instead.

And this life is guaranteed because by his death we are also united to him so that just as he lives, we live. Have a look at verse 56. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood that he believes in my death remains in me and I in them.

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. You see, by believing in Jesus, we are not only rescued from judgment, but we are given his spirit who unites us to him, which means our life is tied to his life. And since he lives forever, then, well, guess what? So too will we. Here's even more assurance. And here it's also the moment that people choose.

[20:30] So point four, verse 60. On hearing it, many of his disciples said this is a hard teaching. Who can accept it? Now, we need to realize just for a moment that Jesus had a bigger group of disciples as well as the twelve.

This big group were the ones who followed him in the boats to listen to him, but now they're having trouble accepting this word from him. And so Jesus pushes them to decide, like he's been doing all

along, and divide between those who really believe and those who don't.

So verse 61. And where his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before? The Spirit gives life.

The flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you, they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and which one would betray him.

He went on to say, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them. Now notice for a moment verse 63, the Spirit gives life.

[21 : 47] To believe and to have life, people need God's Spirit to kick-start their heart, remember? Their flesh counts for nothing. That is, we cannot do it on our own. But also notice how the Spirit gives life.

It's through the Word about Christ. Did you see that? Jesus says the words he speaks are full of Spirit and life. The Spirit works through the Word about Jesus, the Gospel.

And while some of these disciples do believe his word, sadly many don't. So verse 66, from this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

I'm sure they believed in Jesus as the son of Joseph from down the road and even as the prophet like Moses who might rescue them from their physical problems like sickness, the Romans, hunger. That fitted with their expectations. But Jesus as the son of God from heaven, the one who would rescue them from their biggest problem of judgment, no, no, that's just all too hard to accept.

[22 : 57] Eating his flesh, believing his death, not possible. And so they grumble. Their faith was fickle, you see, despite the evidence they did not really believe in him. They didn't even seek further clarification from him.

They simply turned their backs on him. And so Jesus then turns to his disciples in verse 67 you do not want to leave too, do you?

Jesus asked the twelve. Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the holy one of God. Great words, aren't they? Last week, the disciples failed the test. They did not recognize who Jesus was. He could provide bread, but now they pass.

They recognize he is the holy one of God, whose word gives life eternal, the one who is real food for life. And while they have really chosen to believe in Jesus, Jesus reminds them that it's only because God has enabled them to, that he chose them.

[24 : 10] You see verse 70? Then Jesus replied, have I not chosen you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil. He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who though once one of the twelve would later betray him.

So what is the big application from this passage? What is Jesus driving the people to do one way or the other? It's clear, isn't it? To believe in him. not just as a good man who taught good morals, nor even as an exceptional person who perhaps performed miracles, but as the son of God whose death gives life eternal.

We can work for food to keep living in this world, but physical food only ever gives limited life. Jesus and his death for us, however, is real food and gives unlimited life.

And so do you believe in Jesus? Do you trust in him? And for us who do then the application is to keep believing in him.

That's what it means to feed on him. It means to continue trusting in him and his word. And we had to do so without grumbling like the Jews when his word is hard to accept or he does things that we don't expect.

[25 : 31] Some time ago I was talking with someone from they'd been praying for him for many years and I can't quite remember how the conversation came up but I do remember them saying yeah it is really hard and we're really tired but we try not to grumble and then they quote of verse 68 saying I mean where else do we have to go when Jesus has the words of eternal life what better alternative is there than to keep trusting in Christ none they said and I thought here are some people whose faith is not fickle who continue believing in Jesus without grumbling even when his word is hard to accept or he doesn't act in a way we expect or in their case even when he doesn't answer the prayers the way they'd wish oh sure cry out why cry out how long ask for help but we have faith on Jesus keep trusting in him without grumbling and secondly with gratitude for God has enabled us to believe to have life and not only have life eternal but that

God will keep us Jesus will keep us to the very end he will lose none of us that God has given him is that not reassuring is that not worth being grateful for another person from our church was in constant pain for more than two years in that time she never left her nursing home people had to feed her and shower her her life was a constant struggle so much so her non-Christian children even told her to give up her faith why believe in God if he let you go through all this they said but she kept her faith I'm sure she questioned and she wrestled but she never walked away how was she able to do that humanly speaking it defies logic at least her children thought it defied logic but you see Jesus would not let her go that's why she could keep trusting and he would not let her go so that she would not miss out on heaven or her life to come and she didn't she's now with Christ in heaven ready to be raised on the last day and to enjoy the new creation with a perfect pain free body and we who believe have this assurance too is this not encouraging is it not worth being grateful for well I need to wrap up our society seems obsessed with so called real food even real bread actually on the next side there's real bread campaign which bakers put up in their bakery to guarantee all this talk of bread it just has too many carbs for us and so on the next side don't worry there's low carb bread out there now as well just for you but of course Jesus is the only truly real food the bread of life who gives life eternal so may we continue to feed on that is believe in him let's pray our gracious father we thank you for your word this morning we thank you for the reminder to continue to believe in Jesus help us to do so without grumbling even when his word is hard to accept or you act in ways we don't expect and help us also to keep believing him with grateful hearts knowing that you will never leave us nor forsake us but that you will keep us until that last day father help sake amen