

Food for Life

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[0 : 00] Well, more than ever, our society seems obsessed with real food, doesn't it? I mean, once upon a time, everyone was happy with this type of coffee, the old international roast, weren't they? But now, people ask, is it a real coffee? Or even late last year, there was the honey debacle. Do you remember that? So on the next slide, there was a fake honey scandal which spread throughout Australia.

It was apparently being watered down or syruped down, I don't know, glucose. So anyways, syrup being mixed with the real honey. And so on the next slide, brands like this were contaminating their honey, so it was said.

And people kicked up a big fuss because they wanted the real stuff. Or take cooking shows like MasterChef or My Kitchen Rules, which talks about real cooking and real food.

So much so that the other night, we just said Grace, and we're about to start our meal. And one of our kids said, wait, I need to score Mum's dinner out of 10. And Michelle replied with just one word, dessert.

[1 : 05] And they all three of them gave her a 10 out of 10. The point is, more than ever, our society seems obsessed with so-called real food. And I say so-called because this food only ever gives us limited life.

We've got to keep eating it, don't we? But today, Jesus tells us to get truly real food, food that gives life unlimited. So at point one in your outlines and verse 22 in your Bibles, please follow along.

The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there and that Jesus had not gone into the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had gone away alone.

And then some boats from Tiberias had landed that morning near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and then went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. Now, remember, the day before was the day that Jesus fed the 5,000 with bread and fish. Vijay helped us to see that last week. He brought in a whole lot of bread so we'd remember.

[2 : 20] Thankfully, he didn't bring in a whole lot of fish too. But he summarized lots of connections with the Exodus where God rescued Israel through Moses. And so was this another rescue here with Jesus?

And the crowd, it seems, got part of that connection. So do you remember verse 14, chapter 2, verse 14? They think Jesus is the prophet whom God would send into the world who would be like Moses, who would teach the people and rescue the people again.

And so, chapter 2, verse 15, they try and make Jesus their king by force, it says, that he might rescue them from the Romans. In fact, the Jews had already tried this with two other men before Jesus, the Bible tells us.

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 crowd wakes up, the next day, Jesus is gone and they go searching for him.

And then they find him in 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 not looking for me.

[3 : 36] So you're looking for me not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. And now back in verse 2, at the beginning of the chapter, we're actually told that the crowds did follow Jesus because they saw the signs.

But Jesus is saying here, he's not contradicting himself. He's saying, you're not really following me because of what the signs pointed to, but because of what the signs gave you, a full stomach. Or back in verse 2, physical healing. You see, they're so focused on how Jesus can rescue them from their physical problems, whether it's a sickness in verse 2 or a political power in verse 15, or from hunger here in verse 26.

They're so focused on being rescued from their physical problems that they've missed their bigger problem, their problem of eternal judgment from sin. It can't get much bigger than that.

It's a bit like this guy on the next slide. This guy is so focused on his engine that he's kind of missed the bigger point around him.

[4 : 45] And the crowd is a bit like that. They're so focused on their physical problems, they forget their biggest problem that Jesus has actually come to rescue them from. That they need eternal life to be saved from eternal judgment.

And so Jesus says, don't waste your time getting this physical food, get some real food. Verse 27. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval. Then they asked him, 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.

Now we all know that our food spoils or goes off, although someone did remind me this morning that technically honey never goes off. But most of it has best before dates or used by dates, doesn't it?

And all of it, honey included, only gives us limited life. They say we can last without food for about three weeks. Without water it's about three or four days.

[5 : 56] But Jesus says there's another type of food that has no use by date, who gives unlimited life, life eternal. And the people are to work for that food.

Now naturally the people think Jesus is talking about doing religious works, plural, to earn this life. But Jesus says there's actually only one work, singular, and it's simply to believe in him.

For Jesus is the food who gives eternal life. So point to verse 30. The chapter is kind of arranged around the people's questions.

So 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 fathers or ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness.

As it is written from our first reading, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Now it seems that people understood they needed to believe in Jesus, that they get it, but now they want another sign to prove it.

[6 : 59] And the irony is, they've just been given one big sign, haven't they? Jesus had just fed them all 5,000 plus yesterday. In fact, the bread that they ate is still digesting in their bellies.

But it's not good enough for them. And it's like people today, really, isn't it? And people say, If God shows me a sign, then I'll believe. Have you ever heard someone say that or seen it on TV?

The human heart, though, is dead to sin. So it will never work. The human heart is dead to God. So as we'll see, God needs to revive our hearts.

He needs to enable us to believe. Signs might provide proof, yes, but only God is the one who provides life. Yet since the people are talking about a sign like manna or bread from heaven, Jesus says, 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 you 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 rather excitedly say, always give us this bread.

[8 : 13] Then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

But as I told you, you have seen me and the signs and still you do not believe. They want bread from heaven and Jesus says, Here I am. I am the bread from heaven, the bread from God who gives life with God.

But despite seeing the signs, these people still refuse to believe. And for us, though, who do believe, did you notice, we will never hunger nor thirst.

That is, we will always be full. And not physically, of course, but spiritually. We have a full life with God now spiritually, as such that we have full access to him as our heavenly father.

We can pray to him anytime, anywhere. We don't have to go through priests or be at a church or whatever. We have the full blessings, spiritual blessings, the Bible tells us, every one of them. [9 : 23] And we have the guarantee of physical life later on judgment day, where God will raise our bodies to enjoy the fullness of his new creation.

And in fact, even more than that, Jesus will even keep us until that day. Do you see verse 37? All those the father gives me will 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'll raise them up at the last day.

See what a wonderful encouragement this is for us who believe. Jesus will keep us trusting in him. He will lose none of us the father has given him.

[10 : 36] What an amazing assurance we as Christians have. No other religion in the world gives this. And all this is by believing in Jesus, the bread of life from heaven.

But all this is just too much for the people to believe. See verse 41? At this, the Jews 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 say, I came down from heaven? See what they're saying? Well, we know this guy.

He's not from heaven. He's from Joseph down the road. Interestingly, for the first time in the 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 because God did not meet their expectations. And here the Jews now grumble because Jesus does not meet their expectations.

[11 : 44] They expected him to be the son of Joseph and perhaps a prophet like Moses who might provide physical life. That's okay. not the son of God though who claims to provide eternal life.

They can't cope with that and so they grumble. But you see, we can do that too, can't we? When God doesn't meet our expectations or answer our prayers with what we want and when we want 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 will 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 believe in him unless the Father first teaches or draws them, enables them to believe.

Here we have the doctrine of election or that very naughty word that no one likes to mention, predestination. We don't have time to unpack it now, you'll be glad to know, but it is peppered throughout the passage.

[12 : 59] In verse 37, verse 39, God gives people to Jesus. Here in verse 44, God draws people to Jesus. Or later on in verse 65, God has not enabled them to believe in Jesus.

Or even in verse 70, the disciples believe and Jesus reminds them it's because he has chosen them. This teaching is throughout the whole passage.

But this teaching raises all sorts of questions for us, doesn't it? Like, what about our free will, our choice? What about my loved one who does not yet believe? And the Bible does give us lots of answers, like, that our hearts are spiritually dead to God, so, of course God needs to first revive our hearts so we can believe.

You know, put those defibrillator paddles on, one, two, three, clear, get us alive. God needs to revive us so we can believe in Jesus. And what's more, the Bible also tells us we don't know what God has planned for our loved ones.

And so we ought to keep praying for them, praying that God would raise up other Christians around them. In fact, a member of our church, she had been praying for her husband for almost 60 years.

[14 : 11] 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?

And when God doesn't operate according to our expectations, doesn't give us the answers, all the answers we want, we can either grumble like the Jews or we can remember all the evidence we have, keep praying for those who don't believe, prayer night, this Wednesday night, and gratefully thank him 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 eternal life.

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] I don't think Jesus can be any clearer. He is the bread from heaven who gives eternal life. But he does push the bread metaphor somewhat, doesn't he?

He now says, we who eat him live forever. Just to be clear, he's not promoting cannibalism. He's just extending the metaphor. To eat means to believe.

And he's been talking about believing all the way through his passage, hasn't he? But Jesus pushes the metaphor because he wants to push the people to make a decision. 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. Because it's by his death that we are given life.

That's what the end of verse 51 means. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world at the cross. And it's his death that he now focuses on.

[16:23] So point three in your outline, verse 52 in your Bibles. 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. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

Jesus is talking about his flesh and blood, which is pretty obvious talking about his death, his sacrificial death on the cross. But again, he pushes the metaphor, doesn't he?

And so he's again saying eating and drinking his flesh and blood really means believing in his death for us. And now some people actually say that this is referring to the Lord's Supper.

And so some churches say that the bread actually becomes Jesus' flesh and the grape juice and wine actually becomes his blood and we have to do that because John 6 says so.

[17:36] But it's not talking about that at all. It's talking about believing, as we've seen, it's a metaphor, it's talking about believing in his death. In fact, that's what we do at the Lord's Supper. We remember and believe afresh in Christ's death for us.

And so both these verses and the Lord's Supper are talking about Christ's death for us, believing in it. For Christ's death is how he gives us life.

For in his death he took the eternal judgment for our sins so that we can be rescued from it and given life eternal instead. Back in 2006, a 21-year-old Melbourne girl who's on the next slide called Kimberly Deer, she went skydiving in the US.

It was her first time. Moments after takeoff the engine burst into flames and the plane nosedived. Without thinking her instructor, a man called Rob, pulled her close, said it would be okay and then manoeuvred his body to be under hers so that he took the brunt of the impact.

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

[18:58] Now, of course, neither Kim nor Rob deserve to die but we deserve eternal judgment for sin because sin is much more serious than we ever want to admit to ourselves.

And yet, Jesus took the full impact for us at the cross taking our eternal judgment in one massive hit.

And he did it so that we could be saved from it, rescued from it and have life eternal instead. And what's more, this life is guaranteed because we are now united with Christ.

You see verse 56? He says, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

This is the bread that comes 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 Christ which means our life is tied up with his and since he lives forever then we will live forever.

[20 : 25] Here is even more assurance for the Christian but here is also the moment of the people's choice. Point four verse 60 on hearing it many of his disciples said this is a hard teaching who can accept it.

Now before we go much further we need to realize that Jesus had a bigger group of disciples as well as the twelve. This is the big group who got into the boats early that morning and followed Jesus to the synagogue and have been listening to him ever since but now they're having trouble accepting this word from him.

And so Jesus pushes them to decide and divides between those who really believe and those who don't. See verse 61. Aware that 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 and he went on to say this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the father has enabled them.

And now notice for a minute verse 63 says the spirit gives life to believe and have life the people need God's spirit to revive our hearts remember the flesh counts for nothing in others we can't do it ourselves but also notice how the spirit gives life it's through Christ's word Jesus says the words he speaks are full of spirit and life you see the spirit works through the word about Jesus the gospel which is why we need to keep proclaiming this word and while some of these disciples do believe this word sadly many don't so verse 66 from this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him you see many of them they believed in Jesus as the son of Joseph sure and even perhaps the prophet like Moses who might rescue them from their physical problems like you know sickness the Romans hunger but they could not come at

[22 : 55] Jesus being the son of God from heaven the one in whom we have to come to and depend on like we depend on food for life and so they grumble and what's more they turn away their faith is 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 own 12 disciples in verse 67 and says you do not want to leave too do you Jesus asked the 12 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 last week Vijay pointed out that the disciples failed the test in verse 6 they didn't truly recognize who Jesus is but here they finally pass don't they they recognize he is the holy one of God the one whose word gives life eternal the one who is real food for life and while they have really chosen to believe in Jesus for themselves

Jesus reminds them not to be arrogant because in the end it's because he has chosen them first do you see verse 70 then Jesus replied have I not chosen you the twelve yet one of you is a devil and he meant Judas the son of Simon Iskerritt who though one of the twelve was later to betray him and so what is the big application from this passage this morning well it's what Jesus has been driving the crowd to do the whole time to choose whether you'll believe in him or not and so do you believe in Jesus 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 for us we can work for food to keep living life in this world but physical food will never give us life unlimited will it only Jesus and his death for us will so do we trust in him for us who do then we are to continue trusting in him that's the application and that's what it means to feed on him it means to continue believing in him and his word and as we do so we are to do it without grumbling when his word is hard to accept or he lets things happen we don't expect some time ago I was talking with some people from our church about their son who has great difficulties in life

I've been praying for him for many years I can't quite remember how it came up I remember I was just down the front here chatting with them and I also remember they said it's really hard and we're really tired but we try not to grumble and then they quoted verse 68 because they said where else have we to go when Jesus has the words of eternal life there is no better alternative for us they said than to keep trusting in him I thought here are some people whose faith is not fickle is it but who continue to believe in Jesus without grumbling even when his word is hard to accept or he doesn't act in the way we expect or in their case even when he doesn't answer their prayers the way they'd wish I'm sure we had to cry out why cry out how long ask for help beg for help from God but we had to feed on

Jesus keep believing in Jesus without grumbling but with gratitude for God has enabled us to believe and not only that he will keep us until that day trusting in Jesus and that reassurance is that not worth being grateful for thankful for another person from our church was in constant pain for more than two years in that time she never left the nursing home people had to feed her and shower her her life was a constant struggle so much so her non-Christian children actually even told her in those two years why don't you give up your faith why believe in God if he lets you go through all this they said but she kept her faith oh sure she questioned and she wrestled but she never walked away how was she able to do that I mean humanly speaking it defies logic the kids certainly thought so but you see Jesus would not let her go that's how he kept her by his spirit trusting in him 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 same assurance too is that not worth thanking God for being grateful for well our society seems obsessed with so-called real food even real bread on the next slide there's a real bread campaign out there now which bakers put up to say that they use natural ingredients it's occurred to me too by the way that all this talk about bread for the health freaks out there you know it's too many carbs

I realise but don't worry there's even bread for you on the next slide low carb bread just for you but of course the only truly real food real bread is Jesus for only he gives life eternal so may we continue to feed on that is believe in him let's pray gracious father we thank you for this reminder this morning of who Jesus is and what he gives father we pray that you would help us to keep feeding on him that is to keep believing in him and his word help us to do this without grumbling even when it's hard to do and help us to do this with gratitude remembering you're always with us and will keep us to the very end father we ask these things in Jesus name amen