

The Bread of Life

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[0 : 0 0] we shall turn back now to the passage that we read together in john's gospel in chapter 6 we will be looking at much of this chapter but just to help us focus we'll read again verse 48 for jesus said i am that bread of life i know you could never tell but i love my food and there is one thing that improves good food and that is good company and i have been blessed even since coming here amongst yourselves to enjoy much good food and much good company but one of the things i'm conscious of especially over a communion weekend is that when you have a house school of people coming for food and to dine with you that much preparation needs to be made it isn't the case that people just turn up and then you suddenly look to see what is in the cupboard you like to make sure that you have things in beforehand the shopping has been done and the bed has been prepared and the meat is in the oven and hopefully especially the pudding is ready to be served all these things are done beforehand in preparation because you know you can't just have you know endless folk arriving into the house and be expected just to feed them there and then number of years back when we're still ministering in the black isle my wife i felt was taking revenge on me for all the times that i had unexpectedly taking people back to the house for food she had gone out shopping but she returned very quickly and she came in and she said there are some people coming in for coffee and i asked who and she said 50 dutch tourists and i panicked i wondered how and why and what had happened was that there was this tour bus that was going around the black isle they were actually a group of christians and they'd come to see the preaching site at the burn in ferrentosh and as they were going along the single track road which was too narrow for the bus the bus actually went into the ditch and it went over on its side and my wife came on the scene of this accident there were 50 passengers and they all screamed out and she said come up to the manse and you can get a cup of coffee there or something while you're waiting for the rescue services and the other bus and so on to come and so in the cave all waiting to be fed well if you can multiply that times a hundred you can get a sense of the panic that must have been in the disciples hearts when jesus with 5 000 men before them said give them something to eat they had nothing ready nothing prepared nothing with them and jesus says to them now i want you to feed these 5 000 men i want us to look at this occasion this morning as we look at this meal that ended up being served

to these 5 000 men and as we look at this meal together there's really three things i'd like us to focus on first of all we're going to see a meal that was miraculous secondly we're going to see a meal that was moorish and then thirdly a meal that is a must first of all then a meal that was miraculous this meal was a meal that was much needed the disciples themselves needed food if we were to go to mark's gospel in chapter 6 we read there about how jesus had sent the disciples out with to the various towns and villages to perform their ministries and we're told that they come back to jesus and they're exhausted after all that they have done and they're reporting to him all that has happened it is also during this time that john the baptist has been beheaded and remember many of the disciples initially were followers of john the baptist so they're also a group of men who are grief-stricken they are physically exhausted they are emotionally exhausted and mark tells us in his gospel that jesus says to them come yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while for there were many coming and going and they had no leisure so much as to eat and they departed into a desert place by the ship by a ship privately so here we have tired and hungry men when we look at the disciples themselves but also now there is this great crowd that has gathered and they have traveled a great distance to come and hear and see the lord jesus they have been away from home for some time and they too are tired and hungry and we're told that they are in a remote place there aren't shops nearby there aren't restaurants there aren't inns or hotels they're in this remote place and we're told that the time has gone so it is late into the evening and so we have the disciples and we have the crowd all very much in need of a good meal so it's a meal that was needed we then

see also that it is a meal that was planned we're told that jesus says to philip where will we buy bread that these may eat it is a perplexing question philip is wondering where will we get bread that all these people can't eat but john tells us that jesus asked this question to test him or to prove him for he himself knew what he would do jesus already knew what he was going to do it was all planned you see let's go back to our 50 dutch visitors that we had in the black isle when i was panicking my wife was not simple reason that day was a saturday and it was our communion weekend and our cupboards were full of food all the boxes were full of baking and so she was not panicked because she already knew what she was going to do when she invited them back to the house she knew what food she was going to give them it was already all worked out in her head even if it wasn't

in mine in the same way jesus had it all planned in his head even although the disciples were planted and panicking not knowing what to do it was planned by christ himself it was needed it was planned it was provided the disciples had their ideas their wild imaginations as to what might be possible and it all involved local b&b's; it involved restaurants it involved shops it involved money it involved various transactions that would need to take place they had all these ideas but jesus he gets the crowds to sit down on the the grass and then he provides miraculously he provides there is a small boy there and he has five barley loaves and two small fishes the disciples are saying but what's that among so many jesus carries on regardless he takes the loaves he takes the fish he gives thanks over them and then he distributes it to the disciples he tells the disciples to give it to those that were sat down and so they begin giving the fish and the bread and miraculously it seems to multiply and multiply and they are given this food that cost them nothing that they made no effort for it was just there for them provided by christ it was needed it was planned it was provided and there was plenty we're told in verse 11 that they could have as much as they would that's as much as they wanted and even after they had eaten as much as they wanted we read in verse 13 that there was plenty left over that there were these 12 baskets of fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten it was a meal that was miraculous now this meal it was a sign john presents to us in his gospel various signs the first one was the turning of the water into wine at the wedding in galilee but there are numerous signs and the signs are meant to point us to the uniqueness of jesus christ the signs are meant to reveal to us something of the messiahship of jesus and so here is one of these other signs as they look at this miraculous meal they're meant to stand in awe and recognize something of the unique power and abilities of jesus they're meant to recognize him as the great savior and the messiah sent from god but it's more than a sign it's also an illustration not just a sign of the savior but an illustration of salvation because you see the gospel is often presented as a meal and the invite in the gospel is often presented as an invite to a meal or to a feast you think if i say a 55 you owe everyone who thirsts come buy wine and milk without money without price it's like the picture of a vendor there in his market stalls saying come and get food from me here and it will cost you absolutely nothing you think in luke's gospel chapter 14 where again the gospel is presented like a great feast and the invite goes out to all to come and to to to enjoy this a great feast and so that theme continues so that even once you get in it to glory itself as we see it in the book of revelation we see there a great feast a great meal it's like a big wedding reception and it's the marriage of the lamb so the gospel is often presented as a meal and as an invite to it and when you stop and think of it it is because well this is a meal that's needed we need the gospel we are sinners and we need salvation it's a meal that's planned the way of salvation is something that has been planned by christ by god himself it is something that's provided it's not something we work for it's not something we buy it's not something we earn it is provided it is given to us for nothing and it's something where there's plenty it isn't a frugal gospel that we preach it's not that there's just enough maybe if we let it stretch a bit yet there is room yet there is room there is plenty of room and the call goes out to all and to everyone to come and eat and to enjoy this great gospel meal it is the most fantastic invite and it is the most fantastic food because it is the gospel of salvation as we find it in christ jesus our lord today we will also have a meal this is the lord's table it is the lord's supper and it too is a sign and an illustration it too is a meal that is miraculous in many ways it's something that's needed as believers we need it it's something that's planned it was planned by christ it was designed by him it's something that's provided it was provided by the savior for his people so that we could be sustained and so that we could have it as a means of grace and it is something where there is plenty plenty of the presence of christ plenty of the grace of jesus and even as you know at the end of this meal there will be plenty left over there will be bread and there will be wine left over which to me is even a sign and

illustration to those of you who will not sit at the table but there is plenty of room there is still plenty of room and there is plenty of salvation for you it's a meal that is miraculous it is also a meal that is moorish now moorish is a newish kind of word it's a word that you will hear the young folk saying and you know you're getting old when you talk about the young folk you can think of it it's a famous line in the the play the musical oliver when oliver goes up if you remember to the head of the the orphanage and says sir i want more people talk about things being moorish for the younger i'll say the younger folk for the younger folk it's something like a packet of pringle crisps you take one you want more it's moorish for me it'd be a packet of chocolate digestives you take one you want more they are moorish that's the idea you can never quite get enough well here we find that the people who took from the meal when there was the feeding of the five thousand they found that that meal was moorish they wanted more fruit glorious fruit and that is why they followed after jesus and jesus points this it points this out to them he says you seek me not because you saw the miracles but because you ate of the loaves and were filled you just want more back in chapter four of john's gospel we meet a lady there who felt burdened with her daily responsibilities and duties of going back and forth to a well

for water jesus started speaking to her about this living water a living water that would permanently satisfy her thirst and she started thinking that jesus was talking about some kind of magical water that would mean that she would no longer have to go to the well to draw water from it to quench her thirst because she is thinking purely in material terms she's thinking purely in the terms of physical thirst and as we know and as we'll see in a wee while jesus was talking about something else the people here likewise were very much operating on that material level they had tasted of the bread they had eaten of the food and they are people who are tired because they are working non-stop just to earn a crust they are working so hard to put food on the table and now here is free bread and free fish that has been provided by this man who can perform miracles it's like he can provide manna and quail in the way that god provided for the children of israel in the desert now both to the woman and to these crowds that followed jesus he highlighted the problem they were living in a material world they were living only at a physical level and it was leaving them feeling unsatisfied they wanted a water that would quench permanently their thirst they wanted a bread that would take away permanently at their hunger and they weren't finding it because they were only looking at this material world and this physical existence in which they lived some time back when we were doing a school assembly but we looked at the three I's that people are obsessed with looks lolly and love people are obsessed with their looks the fashion that you know there's a fashion fix there's the great extreme makeovers and all these things just that we have the right look and people can get as close as they can to their right look and they're still not happy lolly money people are obsessed with money this is why people are so frantic when they see the economy in crisis and worried about standards of living and their pension plans and so on because we live thinking our security can be found in finance and yet people no matter how much money they have are not satisfied love relationships that was a problem also with the woman that jesus met at the well she was on her 10th it's serious relationship and still was not satisfied still was not happy it wasn't fulfilling what was the real yearning of our heart and that is the way it is so much in our society and perhaps even in our own lives today no matter how much of the looks and the lolly and the love we get we still want more it's never enough and jesus is saying it's because we are living in a material world and we have these materialistic hearts and minds that never ever are satisfied but that wasn't the only moorish problem there were perhaps deeper moorish problems that the people had to face look at verse 28 when jesus has pointed out to them this materialistic attitude that they have they go on to say what shall we do that we might work the works of god they wanted to do more to be right with god it's instinctive within our fallen hearts think of the crowd at pentecost when peter had preached that

[20 : 19] first sermon after the resurrection of jesus what was the response of the crowd when they were cut to their hearts when they realized what they had done they said what must we do think of the philippine jailer there when paul is in prison and you remember there's the earthquake and all that takes place there and the philippine jailer he is trembling he has fallen his knees he's under great sense of conviction and what is the question he asks sirs what must i do it's instinctive within us we always feel we need to do more to impress god to be right with god to solve the problem of our sins to achieve and secure our place in salvation the people here were suffering from that moorish problem what must we do that we might work the works of god they also wanted to experience more look at verse 30 they said therefore unto him what sign show us thou then that we

may see and believe thee what does thou work they've been impressed with the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand it has almost taken their breath away but they want more they want to see and experience more they want the spectacular they want the extraordinary they want the magnificent they want the thing that they can all be standing almost aghast at that is what they are looking for does it not sound familiar the still small voice is not good enough we want the storm to have our heart like lydia just gently touched by the love of christ is not good enough we want the road to damascus we want more we want to experience more we want the spectacular that is what we're after and what does jesus say to those that want to do more to do more to those who want to experience more he says this is the work of god that you simply believe on him whom he has sent that you believe that's all now often we will use that term to believe in jesus without really explaining at all what it means but jesus was not so negligent and then this very discourse that takes place here he tells them what it means to believe and he uses three very simple everyday actions to describe what it means to believe if you look at verse 35 he says i am the bread of life he that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth in me shall never thirst do you see there what he equates together believing on me and coming to me they're one and the same thing to believe in jesus is to come to jesus now we understand what it means to come if you were to say to me come here i would have to come down out of the pulpit and come down to you it involves action it involves movement it involves me doing something i have to come to you that's what it means to believe in jesus you come close to him you can do it through the word you can do it through prayer you can do it through your attendance in church there are various ways in which you can come close to christ he uses another picture in verse 40 and there's 40 he says this is the will of him who sent me that everyone who seeeth or looketh to the son and believe it on him may have everlasting life

to believe is also to look now again i'm sure many of you especially if you are familiar with the testimony of charles spurgeon will probably know exactly where i'm going to go now because if you're familiar with the testimony of charles spurgeon you'll know that when he one day stumbled across this old methodist chapel in the middle of a snowstorm he went in there and there was this old lay preacher preaching away and look unto me the ends of the earth and be saved and he gives an account of that sermon which he said was not in many ways mainly impressive but this is how it went my dear friends this is a very simple text indeed it says look now looking don't take a great deal of pain it ain't lifting your foot or your fingers just look well a man didn't go to college to learn to look you may be the biggest fool and yet you can look a man who'd be worth a thousand a year to be able to look anyone can look even a child can look but then the text says look unto me i said the future and progress it's many on your looking to yourselves but it's no use looking there you'll never find any comfort in yourselves some look to god the father no look to him by and by jesus christ says look unto me some of you say we must wait for the spirit's working you have no business with that just now look to christ the text says look unto me and then he says the good man followed up his text in this way look unto me i am sweating great drops of blood look unto me i am hanging on the cross look unto me i am dead and buried look unto me i rise again look unto me i ascend into heaven look unto me i'm sitting at the father's right hand oh poor sinner look unto me look unto me this evening when we have our time of fellowship after the evening service no doubt there will be a few questions if there are any difficult questions i know what i'm going to do i'm going to look to your minister and i'm going to wait for him to answer because looking to someone means looking for them to do something that you cannot do for yourself and that's why we look to jesus we look to him to save our souls because we cannot do it for ourselves come look and then the third picture is to eat verse 51 jesus in verse 47 says he that believes in me have everlasting life and then in verse 51 he says i am the living bread which comes down from heaven if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever you see he is equating believing and eating and we all know what it means to eat it is to take the food to put it in your mouth and to let it go inside of you it's as simple as that and it is the same with believing in jesus it is taking jesus for ourselves and it's not keeping him outside but it's taking him inside into our hearts into our lives it is accepting him as the lord and savior of our souls that's what it means to believe to come to look to eat we'll see more of it later on but the problem is that we will always have this more of it later on but the problem is that we want to do more experience more and jesus says no just believe come look eat last thing a meal that is miraculous a meal that is more and then finally

a meal that is a must one of the most anticipated moments when you go into a restaurant is when you're handed the menu and you scan through the pages of the menu to see what it is that really appeals to your taste buds and that is part of the fun of going out to have something to eat well as we open the menu in this gospel restaurant and you look at the pages and you scan what is there what you discover is just bread it's just bread verse 33 speaks of the bread of god verse 35 speaks of the bread of life verse 41 speaks of the bread of heaven verse 51 speaks of the living bread and it's like the bible is the heavenly waiter saying to us i recommend the bread because without the bread you cannot have life you cannot have life jesus explains to us what is meant by this bread the bread of god the bread of life the bread of heaven the living bread but what he says if we're to be honest really sounds quite horrendous he says this bread is my flesh and unless you eat of my flesh and unless you drink of my blood then you cannot ever have this everlasting life that you are craving for it does sound quite horrendous but today helps us understand what he means shortly as we observe the lord's supper we will have bread and we will have wine before us and the bread symbolizes as you know the body of jesus the wine symbolizes the blood of jesus the body was broken the blood was shed and so the bread and the wine they represent to us both the person and the work of jesus christ and the work of jesus christ so when jesus says to us unless you eat my flesh and unless you drink my blood then you cannot know life what he is telling us is that we must accept him both the person and the work of jesus christ for ourselves and again at the table as we take the bread as we take the wine that is really what we are saying we accept both the person and the work of jesus as the very foundation of our salvation that's what we're saying i accept jesus and i accept all that he did on the cross when his body was broken and his blood was shed it's a meal that is an absolute must because unless we accept the person and the work of jesus for ourselves then we are still in our sins and we are lost this is what christ himself is telling us he's saying you must it is not an option you must accept me and my work if you are to know everlasting life the disciples when they heard this they said this is a hard teaching and some of them you know found it so hard that were told they turned back they were unable to accept this they couldn't quite come to terms with the fact that the only way that they could get to heaven the only way they could be right with god was through the person and the work of jesus and some just went off and then jesus turns to the

twelve and says now what about you will you also go away and peter comes with this great line where shall we go you you alone have the words of eternal life he's saying there is no alternative there are no other options out there he was standing before the one who was the way the truth and the life the one whom we have to go if we're going to go to the father peter recognized that this was an absolute must and therefore he's saying i am following and there'll be no turning back there will be no turning back today i ask all of you those of you at the table those of you who are not where is it that you are putting your faith and hope for salvation how do you intend to get to glory jesus is saying it's only through him and if you walk away from him you walk away from life and we should tune into i suppose the realization of peter here and to see that it makes no sense absolutely no sense whatsoever to refuse christ jesus and it makes perfect sense to embrace him as our lord and our savior because he and he alone has the words of eternal life we pray that god would bless to us these thoughts on his own holy word let us pray our god and our father we do give thanks for that bread that came from heaven we give thanks that our christ satisfies our deepest needs and longings we give thanks that he is that bread from heaven was broken even on the cross of calvary we give thanks that today we can remember his death and celebrate the salvation that he has achieved lord god continue to be with us now we pray for what we ask is in his name amen and shortly we will observe the sacrament of the lord's supper and as you know it is our custom at this stage to try and make it clear who it is that should be at the lord's table who it is that it should not be with us that it should not be at the lord and for that i want us to go back to this idea of belief put quite simply the lord's table is for those who believe in the lord it is the believers table but we ask again what does it mean to believe we've looked at these three simple things about you to come and to look and to eat but maybe we could try and put it in a different way because as you know the bible itself tells us that the devils believe and tremble that is not that kind of belief that we are talking about again maybe some of the young ones here will be familiar with a song that goes like this i believe i can fly i believe i can touch the sky i think you're right it's night and day spread my wings and

fly away i believe i can soar i see me running through that open door i believe i can fly now a person may believe that they can fly they may flap their arms very widely at the side of them but the truth is

they're not going to take off no matter how much they believe they can fly however at your manse i see planes coming back and forth into the airport if i was to go to the airport i could say i believe i can fly but it would not involve me flapping my arms and taking off what would it involve it would involve me getting into a plane and believing that that plane is able to take off and to take me from storm away to glasgow or wherever this is not a blind faith it's a faith that is based on knowledge knowledge and experience the knowledge of avionics the experience of having been in a plane before and seeing others in a plane although it's not just the plane of course that i'm putting my faith in the faith or belief would also be in the pilot that he knows what he's doing he knows where he's going that he's competent and that he is able to take that plane from a to b in the same way i could say i believe i can be forgiven i believe i can get to heaven well no matter how much i try i cannot forgive myself and no matter how hard i try i cannot get to heaven myself i need to believe in someone or something else i need to believe that christ can forgive my sins that christ can take me to heaven if you like he's like the plane that i must go into he is the pilot that i must trust i must believe in him to get me into the presence of the father and into glory itself so the table is really for people who have stopped trying to flap their wings in order to fly and who have got into the plane that is christ who have stopped trying to pilot their own lives by their own wisdom but who have trusted their lives to jesus as that great divine pilot for them perhaps you can think of it another way a number of years ago i can remember having a problem with my throat there was a slight growth in one of my vocal cords and it meant that it had to be removed and for that i needed an operation it is amazing to find that you can't and aren't allowed to perform the operation yourself i had to go into hospital and there i had to entrust myself into the care of the medical staff there and i had to go under the knife of a surgeon it helped by the fact that i knew who the surgeon was it also helped knowing that that surgeon had operated in my father some years before and had been very professional and very successful in what he did it's the same thing when it comes to believing in christ there is something that needs to be removed there is the problem of sin there is that tumor of sinfulness that needs to be taken from us and the

[40 : 35] thing is we can't perform the operation ourselves in fact we can't even help in the operation we have to let the divine surgeon do it all and we put ourselves under his care we entrust ourselves into his hands believing that he can and will perform this operation successfully that's really what it means to believe see again that's what the table is for it's for people who have said i am suffering from the problem of sin and i cannot remove the sin myself myself i am trusting jesus to do it for me so if today you have faith in jesus faith in him as the one who alone can take you to heaven faith in him as the one who alone can take away your sins then the table is for you and if you're still flapping trying to fly yourself and if you're still trying to perform that operation for the removal of sin from yourself then you're not ready yet to be at the sinner's table for the people who are looking alone to the savior for their salvation we're now going to sing a couple of verses from psalm 118 psalm 118 psalm 118 psalm 118 psalm 118 psalm 118