

John 6:22-40

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[0 : 0 0] Let us pray together. Heavenly Father, may the words of my mouth and the many meditations of our hearts be inspired and sanctified by your Holy Spirit.

! Be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our Maker and our Redeemer. Amen. And take a seat. And if you closed your Bible, would you please open it back up to page 892.

John chapter 6, 892. We begin in verse 35. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

A little bit of context. Yesterday, Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. Pretty good for a day's work. Now people are searching for Jesus because they want more bread, and Jesus doesn't give them to them.

He gives them something completely different, but infinitely better. And this is often the case in our lives with Jesus. We come to him and we say, Jesus, I really need this.

[1 : 1 6] I really want this. I really desire this. And it feels like he doesn't give us what he asked for. Rather, he gives us something different than what we came to receive. And that's what's happening in this passage.

Verse 35. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall not thirst. This is the gem at the heart of the passage.

This is the crux of the matter. Chapter 6 is long and lengthy. But if we understand this one verse, we'll understand not only chapter 6, we'll understand the gospel of John, and we'll understand the heart of the Christian life.

Because Christianity isn't just about the forgiveness of sins. What a wonderful gift that is.

Christianity isn't just about following and obeying and being a disciple of Jesus. But my goodness, what a wonderful gift that is.

Christianity at its heart, according to this verse, is about feeding on Jesus. It's about feasting day in and day out, week in and week out. Taking him into the core of our lives and inwardly digesting the goodness of his grace.

[2 : 2 1] Until we receive spiritual nourishment and life, and we experience the very life of God welling up within us. I am the bread of life, says Jesus. And this is what Jesus wants for us here.

Now, on a really personal note. When I was in grad school, this verse, I think no other verse in the Bible played a more formative role in my Christian faith than this verse right here.

I used to write it on a 3x5 card. You know, little flashcards. Along with my Greek and Hebrew words. And I would stick it in my pocket when I left every morning.

And on the way to the bus, in between classes, on a break from work, before and after meals, I would have it ready to take out and turn to when I needed it. And one of the amazing things in that time is that I think Jesus did a work in me through this verse.

Showing me that what he wants to give me more than anything else is himself. It was this moment of turning from loving Jesus simply for what he can give me, although that's wonderful, to loving Jesus for Jesus.

[3 : 2 8] And I think there are two things that this verse wants to say to us this morning. It wants us to tell us something about who Jesus is. And it wants to tell us something about who we are. So let's begin with who Jesus is.

In the very beginning, I am the bread of life. Now, any of you recognize those first two words, I am? Where's the first place in the Bible that you hear those?

Exodus? What chapter? I know you guys know this. You guys are the smartest service at St. John's. Don't let anybody else know I said that.

It's Exodus chapter 3. Moses is tending sheep. And suddenly God appears to him in a burning bush, and yet the bush is not consumed. And God speaks to Moses and says, Moses, Moses, I want you to deliver my people who are in slavery out of Egypt.

And Moses, taking off his shoes because he's on holy ground in the presence of Almighty God, says, God, what am I going to say to the people when they say, what is the name of the God who sent you to us?

[4 : 31] And for the first time we hear in the Old Testament, God replies, I am who I am. In other words, God doesn't really answer their question. Because his name is indescribable.

And yet this I am language designates his personal presence and his personal name when God shows up in a fiery bush and says, I am going to save my people. And actually that name is then used seven times, that I am statement, seven times throughout the Old Testament.

And the Gospel of John picks up on it. And we hear Jesus making seven I am statements in the Gospel of John. In other words, Jesus is saying, I am the burning bush.

I am the living God now in your midst. I am the one who has come to save and deliver my people from slavery. And the very first time we ever hear Jesus using this I am something language is right here in chapter six.

I am the bread of life. And I don't know about you, but I love good bread. I grew up with a mother with an Italian heritage and bread was a big part of our lives.

[5 : 42] You have bread for breakfast. You have bread for lunch. You have bread for dinner. You have bread for a snack before you go to bed. And if you wake up in the middle of the night, you get some bread. It's just bread, bread, bread, bread, bread.

And still to this day, when I walk through my neighborhood, I smell that yeasty, tasty, soury, I don't even know if that's a word, bread smell. And it does something in me.

I start salivating. I hunger for it. I want to go buy it. And that's what bread does to us. It's how it works. When you smell it, you want to find it. When you find it and see it, you want to taste it.

And when you taste it, you just want more of it. And that's pretty much what Jesus is saying the Christian life is like. It's about seeing. It's about savoring.

It's about tasting how good Jesus is and what he has to offer us. And coming back daily and weekly and monthly for more and more and more. And realizing that Jesus can feed us to greater depths than we ever thought possible and we ever knew we needed.

[6 : 43] I am the bread of life, says Jesus. Life that never degenerates or grows stale or grows moldy. But life that is always fresh and tastes good and multiplies.

Life that can never be taken away from you. I am the bread of life. And this is what Jesus is saying to us about who he is. That's the first point we need to hear this morning.

But Jesus gives us more. He tells us also about who we are. And this is the second half of verse 35. I'm essentially just preaching one verse to you this morning.

Verse 35. I am the bread of life. Second half. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Note that word. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Note that word. It's very visceral language. It's appetite language. It's all throughout the Gospel of John. Salvation is depicted as tasting the best wine, drinking the best water, and eating the best bread.

[7 : 45] And humans are depicted as people who are hungry and thirsty for life. Searching for it. Yearning for it.

Longing for it. And this, I think, in the Gospel of John is meant to show us what so much of our sin is really about. It's not just blatant hatred. But it's deep hunger that motivates our sin.

Going through life. Looking for life in all the wrong places. As Augustine once said, underneath all my sinning, O Lord, was simply a desire to love and be loved. And I think this is quite profound for us.

There's a profound example of this that isn't talked about much in our culture. It's the pornography industry. It's a multi-billion dollar industry. And we might ask ourselves, what makes it tick? What makes it click?

What fuels it? And I would say to you, it is a hunger and thirst for a relational intimacy in life. In all the wrong places. Every one of us wants to know and be known by somebody.

[8 : 48] And when we are known and are known, every one of us wants to be loved and accepted and love and accept somebody else. Ironically, I came across a quote.

I was standing in line at Superstore a number of years ago, which you know can be a long time. Getting some groceries. And there was one of those People magazines. And there was an ironically sad quote from Hugh Hefner.

It said, I am at the end of my life. And I'm deeply afraid of being alone. And I wonder if I'll ever find love. And so it showed us that when we look for life in the wrong places, it doesn't end up satisfying us.

We find that all these things that we seek that are so temporary and fleeting end up being so dissatisfying. And it doesn't deliver what we offer. And we discover that behind all our dissatisfactions is a hunger and a thirst for the life that only Jesus himself can give.

There's a great song, a great line in one of Bob Dylan's songs where he said, We often think God is an errand boy to satisfy our wandering desires.

[10:01] But really, Jesus has come to tell us that what we most deeply need and deeply desire is him. He has not come into the world to destroy or diminish our desires, but to raise the bar far higher.

And to say we should seek for much, much more. And to say that he is the only one who can give it to us. And to show us that he is very glad and it is his pleasure to give it to us.

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst. If you tuck that in your pocket and you take it out moment by moment throughout the day, it will change your life to experience this from Jesus.

Now, at this point, some of you may be convinced. Some of you may be encouraged. Some of you may be refreshed. Some of you may feel like this is just what I needed to hear this morning.

And there may be others of you who just have doubts in your hearts and minds. Just doubts about this. Questions. Maybe you're wondering, will Jesus' life really satisfy me if I go to him?

[11:07] I mean, honestly. If I go to him, will he really, really be true to his word? And will I really experience the life that he offers and promises? Because if it's not true and it's a sham, I don't want to waste my time.

And in verse 35, Jesus answers us. He says, whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

In other words, Jesus is saying, I really, really can and will satisfy your deepest spiritual hunger. It's hard for us to believe, but it's true.

Jesus can give you life if you come to him. But then there may be some of us that are saying, okay, okay. Jesus can give me life if I come to him. I get it.

But will Jesus really accept me if I come to him? Like, does he actually want to give me personally life? And I think some of us can feel this way because of the guilt and shame and weight of our sin and who we are.

[12:06] It's like most of us here in the room don't know the half about each other. And if you peered into my heart and my history and got to know me the way Jesus is, you'd realize there's no way he can accept me if I went to him.

How could he? It's a bit of that Peter moment where he realizes who Jesus is and he says, depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful person. And Jesus gives a wonderful truth for us to cling to if we're experiencing that in verse 37.

Verse 37, he answers us and he says, all that the father gives me will come to me. And here it is. And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. And this is the strongest possible negation here for Jesus.

In Greek, there are two words for no, ou and may. And in almost every instance, you just use one of the words in order to say no. And here, Jesus combines both words, ou, may, in order to double down on the negative as if to say, this is an impossibility.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. And once the lost are found, they do not get unfound. Jesus, we discover here, is more trustworthy than our feelings.

[13:20] He's more trustworthy than our heart. He's more trustworthy than our guilty conscience. And he's more trustworthy than our troubled minds. He has come and he will never cast us out. Now, some of us may be thinking, okay, Jesus will really give me life.

And Jesus will really accept me. But I don't feel like I have the power to even go to Jesus. I don't even feel like I have the will and desire to actually believe in him.

Some of us feel powerless. And maybe it's because of apathy or fatigue or fear or whatever the reason. It is a hard and helpless place to be. And interestingly, Jesus has an answer for that as well.

An encouragement. Verse 37, all that the Father gives me. Notice the giving language. All that the Father gives me will come to me.

And then verse 39, and this is the will of him who sent me, that I, Jesus, should lose nothing of all that he, the Father, has, here's the language again, given to me.

[14 : 22] Throughout our passage so far, all the giving language has been of God giving Jesus to the world as the bread of life and Jesus giving life to the world by laying down his life.

It's a downward movement of God's grace. And now Jesus is talking about God giving people from the world to Jesus. It's an upward movement of grace. And so God's grace comes down to us, and God's grace brings us up to him.

God's grace gives us life in Jesus Christ, and God's grace empowers us to reach out and receive and embrace the life that he gives. And so we discover here that it's not only our salvation that's in God's hands, it's our faith too.

Our belief is not an autonomous thing, but it's something that God empowers and works in us, meaning we are not alone when we believe in Jesus. It is God who is helping us. So we come to Jesus.

He'll accept us. He'll give us life. God will help us come to Jesus and cling to him and believe in him. He will do this work in us. And yet the last question is, what if the life doesn't last?

[15 : 34] What if it runs out? What if Jesus' life really doesn't stand the test of time? And once again, we're given an answer. Verse 39. This is where we're going to end.

This is the will of him who sent me, says Jesus. Isn't it wonderful that Jesus reveals God's will? That I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day.

So Jesus helps us gaze into our future. And he says, you know what? This life that I'm going to give you isn't going to run out in 70 or 80 years. It's not going to end when you die.

I'm going to continue giving you life on the other side of death. And I will raise you up into newness of life for all eternity. And so Jesus ends by giving us this wonderful comfort and wonderful security as we face the future.

[16 : 42] And it's in light of this hope that he asks us, are you going to spend the rest of your life here on earth too easily pleased and looking for life in all the wrong places? Or are you going to turn to me as the only true source of life?

Discover that I am the bread of life. And experience for yourself that whoever comes to me will not hunger and whoever believes in me will never thirst. Brothers and sisters, I speak these things to you this morning.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.