

Come And Eat

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn back to the chapter we read in John's Gospel, John chapter 6. I'm reading these well-known words of verse 35, John 6 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.

I think one of the themes that came out of the communion weekend was the importance of focusing upon who Jesus is.

It's very important for us to reflect and to remind ourselves of who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, what Jesus has promised to do, what Jesus continues to do, and who Jesus is in relation to ourselves.

As we saw this morning, Jesus made many personal statements about himself. We looked at two of them this morning, and that's what I want us to do tonight, is to look at another of these personal statements that Jesus makes about himself, about who he is.

[1 : 1 4] And they're very simple statements, and yet very often the simple things in life, and the simple statements of life are often very profound.

And Jesus very simply says that he is the bread of life. And that statement that he made followed the most remarkable picnic that probably was ever seen, although there was another instance of this, where we find Jesus feeding what we would termed feeding the 5,000.

And of course, in these early stages of Jesus' ministry and life, huge crowds were going out after him, because people were realizing, this is somebody special.

It wasn't just his teaching, though everybody was saying, this is amazing teaching. This is not like the teaching that we normally hear from the scribes and the Pharisees.

This man is teaching with an authority. There was a reality, there was a power. And so people were sitting up and taking note. But not only was the teaching amazing, but also his life was amazing.

[2 : 2 9] His lifestyle was amazing. And his healing miracles. And of course the word spread about, and vast crowds began to follow. And that's what we have here, is that there was just this huge crowd.

And Jesus asked the disciples, where are we going to get food to, to feed this crowd? And of course Philip said, well, he said 200 denarii, and a denarii was a day, a laborer's wage for a day.

So if you're going to multiply one laborer's wage by 200, you're talking of a fairly large sum of money. And he was saying, that's the kind of money you would need in order to feed the crowd that are here.

And of course then we have Andrew. He says, well, there's this young lad here, and he's got five loaves and two fish. But what is that amongst so many? And Jesus, as we know, performed this amazing miracle.

Where he got them to sit down, and where the loaves of fish were distributed amongst them. And there was more than enough for everybody, to the extent that afterwards they picked up twelve baskets.

[3 : 46] Which is really, is really so remarkable. But the reaction afterwards of this, because everybody who was there, and we were talking of thousands of people, they were saying, oh, come on, this is a prophet.

This is him. This is, this is the one. This is the prophet that was spoken of. And Jesus, seeing their hearts, understood that they wanted to take him and make him king.

And of course, this is, this was not what was going to happen. But after that, Jesus then begins to cut a long story short. But Jesus uses the illustration of the loaves and the fish, of highlighting the fact that he is the bread of life.

And he began to teach them. Now, he didn't read that part. But if we had carried on reading right through this chapter, we find that as he began to get down to the nitty gritty of what it means to be a Christian, and of what it means in accepting him, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior, that many of the people began to take offense.

And they were saying, we're not listening to this. This is not on. And you know, it's the same to this very day, that so, so many people take offense at the truth in the word of God.

[5 : 14] And the Bible tells us that there is an offense in the cross. And in fact, Jesus says that those who believe in him, that there's an offense in it.

And I suppose part of it is that people don't like being told that they're not good enough. You and I don't. If somebody was to tell you, you know, you know something.

Somebody came up to you and said, you know this. You're not really a good person. The people that, the person that people around there see, that's not the real you.

Because right, you know, I can see right into you. And deep down, your heart is so deceitful. And your thoughts are terrible. And you're, there's a, there's, your whole being, you're corrupt right through.

And you say to yourself, how dare that person come up to me and speak like that? But, you know, that's what the, what God's word is saying to us.

[6 : 16] It's telling us very bluntly, ruthlessly, but for our good, that our lives just don't match up. We don't match up to the perfect law of God.

And so many people will take offense at that. And many people will turn away from that. And they say, I don't want to hear that anymore. And you know, that's what happened when Jesus preached to them.

Because loads of the people, in fact, we would say thousands, turned their back on Jesus and walked away.

Because they found his message such that they just, they couldn't take it. And, you know, I think it's probably one of the sad things in life, when you look through life and when you go through life, is to reflect on how many people have grown up within the church and have turned their backs on it.

So many people have been brought up in Christian homes. And yet, as the years have gone on, they've walked away. Some of them will come back.

[7 : 28] But many of them have just, they've reached a stage in their life and they've kind of said, you know, I don't really need this anymore. This is not for me. I'm not really interested in this anymore.

And that's really a very, very solemn and sad thing. And sometimes if people start going away from church, you say to yourself, well, what's the fault? What's the problem?

Is it a fault with the church? Well, it might be. There might be a fault in the church. And they say, is it the fault of the minister? Well, it might be. There might be, to one extent or another.

But the thing is, you have the greatest preacher, the greatest teacher that ever walked this world. The most beautiful passion and personality that ever walked this world.

The words that tripped out of his mouth were sweetness and honey and light and life. And yet in their droves, they turned away from him.

[8 : 30] They didn't want to. In fact, it became so bad that towards the end of the chapter, we find Jesus turning to his twelve. And he said, will you also go away?

I think that I often think of that as probably one of the most heartbreaking moments in Jesus' life. Is seeing just this multitude turning their back on him.

Down to the extent that there's just almost this handful left following him. But prior to that happening, to all these people going away, Jesus, as we said, used the example of the feeding of the thousands to teaching them.

And he was saying, well, the people I'm speaking to are Jews who know the history, the history of their own history. And one of the things that all the Jews knew was the history of Moses and the people of Israel leaving Egypt and going to the promised land.

They were steeped in that, every single one of them. And so Jesus uses this example of Israel being fed for forty years in the wilderness by manna from heaven.

[9 : 46] And he then uses that to illustrate that he is. That's why he says, I am the bread that came down from heaven. And verse 51, I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

So Jesus is saying to them, all that Moses, that what was happening there, is a perfect illustration of who I am. And so Jesus is saying to us all, I am the bread of life.

So let us think very briefly about a wee bit of what this is saying. And what does it mean when Jesus says, I am the bread of life? Well, I would say the first thing that Jesus says by this is that he is absolutely vital for life.

Absolutely vital. Now there are lots of things about life that aren't vital. For instance, I would love to have a boat.

I don't have. And unless something amazing happens, I never will. But I would love to have a boat. There is nothing I love more than going out in a boat. But whether I ever have a boat or not is no big deal.

[10 : 59] It's not going to affect my life one way or another. It's not an essential. And it's the same with so many of the things in life.

They are not essential. There are things that we would love. I mean, I love shellfish. I love lobsters. I love clams. I love prawns. And I would eat them every single day if I could.

But unless you are a fisherman, you can't afford that. It probably wouldn't be good for you anyway. I don't know. But I know that I'm not going to do that. It doesn't matter how much I love it.

It's not something that I'm able to do. And you could illustrate that in loads and loads of ways. But here's something different. Jesus is absolutely essential for your life.

He is the one vital ingredient for your life and my life. Because without him, we will die. We will perish. We're lost.

[11 : 59] And Jesus is telling us so clearly that he alone is who we need for our lives. And Jesus says, whoever comes to me shall not hunger.

So, if you take that logically, it means that those who don't come to him will hunger. So, if you don't come to Jesus, you will hunger.

Now, the thing is, a lot of people are hungry and they don't know it. But they're hungry spiritually and they don't know it. And I think that's part of, we kind of hinted at that this morning, part of what's wrong in life, in the life that we're living today in this world.

Because as a society, we've rejected Jesus. We've turned our back upon Jesus. We're not listening to him. We don't want him. People don't know about him. People are saying there's no absolutes.

They don't know. There's no real truth. Truth is where you're at at the moment. And we're living in, we're living as a result of that. We are living in a society that is becoming, I don't know where it's going to end.

[13 : 07] There's a bubbling intolerance, anxiety, fretfulness all around. You can feel it. It seems almost every year, it seems to be bubbling more and more and more.

And you say to yourself, where is this going to end? But this is the result of turning our back on the gospel. Because in Jesus, Jesus gives us peace.

He gives us light. He gives us hope. He gives us understanding. He gives us identity. He gives us purpose. Take Jesus out of the equation. And you're all over the place.

And that's why we're living in this unbelievably intolerant world. It's becoming dangerous today to have an opinion. If your opinion is not in keeping with those who are most vocal in trying to change society altogether.

And just destroy all that was known in the past. So we're living in this world that is just becoming more and more and more difficult.

[14 : 14] And as I said, that's because we have turned away from the Lord. And you think about it, how different it would be if it was the impact of the Lord Jesus that was affecting the whole of society.

Because the fruit of the Spirit, remember what it says, is love, joy, peace, gentleness, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control.

Think about that. What a different world we would be in today if that's the kind of society that we lived in. But sadly, that's not how it is.

And so, here we are, as it were, we've kind of lost our way because we've turned our back. And it's very interesting that we lost our way at the very beginning through eating.

Eating what was forbidden in the garden. You remember how Adam and Eve ate of the fruit that was forbidden. But life returns to us again by eating.

[15 : 28] And it is by eating upon the Son of God. Eating by faith. Receiving Jesus. Taking Jesus as our own. And taking him into our own hearts so that he becomes our life.

And so, this is who we need. Now, the next thing that we would say with regard to this, not only is bread absolutely vital for our lives, but it's not enough to know about Jesus as the bread of life.

You have to actually eat him. Supposing you had a country and there was a disaster and they were waiting for aid to come in. And the planes came in with all the food and all the supplies.

And it landed there and all the food was being stacked up. But nobody came forward to take any. And people were saying, oh, there's food. And they were saying, oh, that's great.

There's the food. We're going to be okay. There it is. But they don't take it. They don't go to it. They don't reach out. Now, again, in many ways you say that's an absurd picture.

[16 : 41] Because that wouldn't happen. But it's not any more absurd than Jesus saying, I am the bread of life. I am who you need. You need to take of me.

Here I am. And you know, people can be sitting in church week in, week out. Month in, month out, year in, year out. Where the bread of life is being offered to them.

And yet they're never taking. Maybe that's you tonight. You know you need to have Jesus. You know. And yet you're not reaching out.

I don't know why. Maybe you're saying to yourself, I'm going to. Maybe another day, but not tonight. But maybe there won't be another day.

It's so important that we reach out now. Now is the day. Now is the most opportune time. And we mustn't allow these opportunities to slip by.

[17 : 43] So it's essential that we take hold of. And that we actually eat. Now, another wonderful thing about Jesus as the bread of life is that he's free.

Can you imagine if our bake shops, can you imagine Stag Bakery putting up a notice saying, from the hours of 10 till 12 every day, free bread.

There'd be a huge queue. People would be queuing up and say, oh, that's great. Free bread. Of course, that's not the way it is.

But this is how it is with Jesus. He's giving of himself freely all the time. Jesus is being offered to us free. And it's absolutely essential that we take.

And you know, the beautiful thing about the Lord Jesus Christ is that we can, as this like free bread, is that we can take him any time.

[18 : 53] There are no particular moments where the gospel is barred to us and that we cannot take it. Where the Lord will say, you know something, I've closed up the windows of heaven.

I'm not available tonight. It's a closed, business is closed. No, we never have that kind of sign. The Lord, the gates of heaven are open.

And he is inviting continually. And many a person, many a person has come to faith in church. But many a person has also come to faith in their bed at night.

Many a person has come to faith in the quietness of their own room or out in the hill or somewhere where all that they have known and all that they have heard and all these things come together and the Lord begins to deal with them.

You come and you say, Lord, help me. Lord, have mercy upon me. Lord, save me. Lord, please come. And so we find that this is part of the wonderful thing that we can feed upon Jesus at any particular time.

[19 : 59] And again, so much that Jesus says, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

And just as we said in the morning, these are the words of Christ. Jesus says, whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes shall never thirst.

This is a word of the Lord. It cannot change. It is absolutely true. Now, another wonderful thing about this bread, as Jesus is a bread, is it doesn't matter your background.

It doesn't matter your health. It doesn't matter your strength. It doesn't matter your age. It doesn't matter your race. It doesn't matter. Jesus is suitable for everyone. You know, today there's a lot of people with different dietary requirements.

And a lot of people have allergies. Some people are vegans. Some people are gluten-free. There are so many different things. Well, Jesus is suitable for everyone.

[21 : 16] Nobody will say, well, I've got an allergy here. No. He will fit exactly the need that is in your life, in your heart. And that is one of the wonderful things.

The problem is that so many people won't actually taste. You know with little children, sometimes when they're wee, very wee, and you've got something nice, and you know that they like it, and you put it to their lips, but they won't open their mouth.

It's kind of, hmm, no. They're kind of saying, no, I don't think this is going to be good. They've made up their mind this is not going to be good, and so they don't open. And you're saying, come on, you love this.

And then maybe when a little of it just goes in their lips, and they go, hmm. And maybe they lick the lip, and all of a sudden the mouth opens. Oh, yeah, I'll take some of that, thank you.

Do you know, in a sense, that is how it is with the gospel of Jesus Christ. That there is often a resistance, and maybe some of you were like that for years.

[22 : 20] You kept resisting. And maybe some of you are like that still tonight. You're resisting. It's like the spoon is held out there. There you are. It's on your lips, but you won't open. But let me tell you that the moment that your lips begin to taste the sweetness of Jesus, and the saving power of Jesus, it all changes.

And that's why it says, taste and see that God is good. And there isn't any person who has tasted and seen that God is good who says, you know this, I wish I'd never done that.

You won't find a Christian saying, you know the biggest mistake I made in my life? I was starting to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Not saying that your life sometimes will be difficult.

It doesn't mean that life is going to go smoothly all the way. It doesn't say that. But no Christian will turn around at the end and say, you know, that was a bad move.

No, never, ever. So that is a great word from the Lord. Taste and see that the Lord is good. And of course it's not a good sign when you see a Christian losing their appetite for the things of the Lord.

[23 : 37] But we find here it's saying, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. The believing and the coming. You come because you believe.

And you believe through your, you believe one, one is the outworking of the other. And so Jesus becomes all and in all.

You know when you see little children, or suppose you have a child there and they're playing away, happy as Larry. And they're playing with their toys. And then all of a sudden something scares them or something goes wrong.

And they see their mom or dad over there. They'll straight away, they'll leave the toys that they were so happy with. And they'll make their way straight to mom or dad. They will leave behind the things that were important to them and were giving them pleasure.

Because all of a sudden they know, I feel, I need someone I feel safe and secure with. And that's how it is with us. There is nobody else who will give us that safety and that security, that identity, that freedom, that liberty, that purpose in life.

[24 : 55] But the Lord Jesus Christ. And I urge you tonight, if you have never gone before, go to the bread of life and taste and eat and receive him and thank him for what he has done for you.

Let us pray. Lord, we pray to bless us. We give thanks for all that you are and all that you do. We pray that you will have mercy upon us and that you will cleanse us from our sin.

We pray that you will keep us as we journey through life. And that we might know all the riches of your grace. That you will uphold us and that you will take each one of us home safely.

Forgive us our sin, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Let us conclude our service singing in Psalm 34.

And this is from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 34, the Tunis Free Church. It's on page 247. Psalm 34, the Tunis Free Church.

[26 : 29] Psalm 34, the Tunis Free Church.

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[28 : 59] The Peace of God, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.