

A Full Breakfast

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Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[0:00] We can turn back to our reading in John's Gospel, chapter 6. We're going to look at just this section, verse 25, down to verse 51, where Jesus is speaking to this large crowd who have come, seeking after him, having seen a miracle that he performed, especially the miracle of feeding the 5,000.

And in verse 26, we read there, Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of loaves.

Do not labor for food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, and so on.

So they came because of a miracle that Jesus had performed, but Jesus wants to give them now the word, give him his word, and to remind them who he is and hear how he describes himself as the bread of life.

Maybe you've gathered here today, you've come here today, maybe you were given an invitation as you were walking out in the street this morning to come and enjoy a breakfast, to come and enjoy maybe a bacon roll and a cup of tea.

[1:20] Maybe you've come with that in mind, and perhaps then you were invited to come in to the church. And it's great that many of you have come in, and it's good for us just to come together in this way to hear God's word and to share from it.

Because we are reminded in God's word that it's good for us to eat and to enjoy all of these things, that if we want to enjoy life to the full, that we need an extra ingredient, and that is the Lord Jesus himself.

We've all enjoyed a breakfast, I'm sure, this morning of some sort, whether it was in the hall or at home. Breakfast, as they say, is the most important meal of the day. But I want us now to enjoy a full breakfast, to round off the food that we've enjoyed by coming to the word of God and to Jesus, who is describing himself here as the bread of life.

But food, it's such a big part of our lives, we cannot do without it. As I was saying to the younger ones before they went out, as we walk around the town this week, there's always that smell of food coming from somewhere, catching our attention.

And as soon as we smell that food, we start thinking about eating, about sitting and eating. And we spend so much time maybe talking about food.

[2:42] What are we going to have for dinner? What are we going to have in the week ahead? Our thoughts are so much taken up by food. It has that kind of pull on us.

Even as you start talking about bacon rolls, or if you start talking about what are we having for dinner, maybe your mind just wanders and you start thinking about these things.

I want you to come back. Come back. Forget about these things for a moment. Just let's focus our thoughts on what we have before us here. Because here we have Jesus talking about a different kind of food.

And something that should occupy our thoughts and our minds more and more, each and every day. Does Jesus have that same pull on your life today as the thought of food does?

Is Jesus as appealing as the thought of a good meal to you today? Well, as we read here in John's Gospel, chapter 6, what we find is a people for whom food was a big part of their lives.

[3:46] And to go without food meant to go hungry just in the same way as it does for us. They ate just like we do. They went hungry just as we do.

And at the beginning of this chapter, we find that that first section, verse 1 to 15, there was a hunger in their midst.

There was a hunger in their midst because they had been with Jesus. They had been listening to him and the large crowd had come. And there in verse 5, it says, Where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

There was a hunger in their midst. They didn't have anywhere to go and buy food, but food appeared from a little boy who provided for them. And Jesus multiplied that food for them.

A miracle happened. And so that's where they've come from now. They've come and followed Jesus. They've come and followed him looking to see what else that he might be able to give.

[4:49] And when we come into verse 26 and 27, here Jesus gives them a challenge. What now are you looking for from me is the question that he has. Verse 26, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of loaves.

Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life. That's the challenge that he puts before them.

What are they coming for? What are they really looking for in life? A festival has come to an end here in the town.

People have come. People have gone. People are on their way away from here. But what now in life? What's next? What are we hungry for now?

Where are we going? What are we going to do in our lives? Well, Jesus here gives us a way to find life with him. There's three things I want us to look at here together.

[5:54] Three things that we can see Jesus speaking about here that we find ourselves doing in life as well. Well, we find first a people laboring or working.

Laboring and working, they both mean the same thing. A people laboring. That's what maybe many of us will go back to. We also find a people longing.

They're looking for something. They're longing for something. And again, maybe that's your life today as well. You're longing for something. Then thirdly, we see a people living.

A people living. A people with that sense of, I've got something I'm living for. And we see here a people who find life and meaning in Jesus.

Where do you find yourself today? Are you someone who's laboring in life? A person who's working hard for many different things? Are you a person who's got great longings?

[6:54] You're like looking for something. You're looking for answers. You're looking for meaning in life. Or are you someone who is living? And you've got a living purpose in your heart today.

And especially that living for Jesus. That's the three things we're going to look at together. Just for a short time just now. So first of all, we see a people laboring.

A people working. We see this in verse 827. When Jesus says to them there, Do not labor for food that perishes.

He's asking them, What are you doing? What's your purpose in life? What are you laboring for today? What are you working for today? The same way that food takes up so much of our thoughts and so much of our times.

So much of our day-to-day life is taken up in this way of thinking about laboring in life. Working in life. And what are you working for?

[7:55] Because that's what one of our great designs in life is. That we work and we have a goal in mind. Sometimes it's just to get by day by day.

A sense of survival. I need to labor. I need to work. Just to get by day by day. Sometimes you're working. You're laboring because you've got something in mind. Perhaps you've been laboring hard to come and visit the island.

To come to the festival this year. You've had to earn that money to buy that holiday. To buy that trip. You can be working or laboring with something in mind.

Maybe you're laboring. You're working just to get you a comfortable life. A home. To support a family. To support children through university or education or early life.

We can have so many reasons and purposes for laboring. But what's behind it all? What's the real purpose behind it all?

[8:57] The way we are, there's almost something that always has our focus, our attention when it comes to laboring. But is it something that will satisfy?

Is it something that will last? That's what Jesus is asking there in verse 27. Do not labor for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life.

He's saying labor in a way that you see that there is a real purpose. A major sports star in America, Tom Brady, an American footballer.

Quite early on in his career, he was interviewed. And he'd had a very successful career by this point. He had won three Super Bowls. That's the biggest prize in American football.

But as he was interviewed, this is something that he said. Why, having won three Super Bowls, do I still think there's something greater out there for me?

[10:01] I think there's got to be more to it than this. I mean, this isn't it. This can't be what it's all, all that it's cracked up to be.

You see, there was something missing in his life. And the journalist who was interviewing him asked him the question, What's the answer then, Tom? And Tom Brady's response was, I wish I knew.

It's quite a sad interview in many ways that a man who was very successful in his career, who had won great things in his career, but all the time thinking, there's got to be more to it than this.

And asked, what do you think it is? I wish I knew. There was something missing. And it's such a common story in life today for many people.

Laboring, working away, even successful in life, but still there's something missing. Still there's something lacking.

[11:02] And perhaps like Tom Brady, you say today, I wish I knew what that was. I wish I knew. Well, as Jesus meets the crowd here, what he does is he addresses this question of, I wish I knew.

And in so doing, he describes himself as the missing link. When they're saying here, Do not labor for that which perishes, but that which lasts, but the food that endures to eternal life.

They ask the question, Where can we find this? How can I do this work? But he comes to the point where he says, I am the bread of life.

I am the bread of life. I am is one of these great sayings that Jesus has, especially in the Gospel of John. But it's throughout the Scriptures where Jesus or the Lord is saying who he is and how much we need him.

They often go back to the Old Testament. They often remind us of just how our lives are so often consumed by the things of this world. You go back to Isaiah chapter 55.

[12:19] There the prophet Isaiah says, Why do you spend your money on that which is not bread? And why do you labor for that which does not satisfy? So the problem in the Old Testament with Isaiah is the same one here in John's Gospel.

Why are you laboring for that which does not satisfy? He's not saying don't work. That's to be a part of our lives. But he's saying, Why are you living in a way where you don't see a purpose in all that you do?

And he says to them here, You know, you're not coming to me for me. You're coming because you saw me perform great miracles.

What are you really looking for? I hope you didn't come here today just to enjoy a breakfast. I hope you don't go from here today just to enjoy a meal somewhere or to go on laboring in this world with no purpose, thinking I wish I knew what the purpose was when the purpose is here before us.

What are you laboring for? That's the challenge that we have in these words. Is Jesus the center of your attention?

[13:42] And then that leads us into the second point, which is a people longing. A people with a sense of longing, which is what we often are as well. It's the way we live our lives.

We're longing for something. We're looking for something that will fulfill our lives. So what do you want from Jesus? What would you want from Jesus today if you were able to ask him for one thing? Why do you listen to his word? Why do you come looking for him? Because everyone is looking for something in life. But what is it for you?

Well, in verse 28 to verse 34 here, we see a people who are longing for a number of different things. They say in verse 28, what must we do?

What must we do to be doing the works of God? So they're asking these questions. How do we please God? Is there something we can do?

[14:41] Is there a sign? He goes on, show us a sign. You have that question as well. They've got all these questions. How are we going to come and believe in Jesus?

How can we find this bread that you are speaking about? There's a longing. And that's the same in our lives.

There's usually a longing for something in our lives. But what we see here is it's a people who are confused. A people who are mixed up. People who don't really, they know they're missing something, but they don't know how to find it. There's a desire and a longing for good, but they're in a muddle. They're mixed up. They're blowing this way and that way. And again, that's the way our lives can so often be. We've pulled in different directions.

[15 : 37] Just think of how often we're told in our diets what's good for us and what's not, and how often it changes. How often have we been told that chocolate is bad?

But then maybe another day, chocolate is good. How often have we been told to avoid dairy products? And then the next day you're told dairy products are good. To avoid fats, and then you say you need fats. To avoid sugar, and you need sugar. There can be so much confusion. But we know a bad diet is bad for us in different ways. Not just outwardly, but inwardly. We know that there is a concern if our diet is wrong and it's starting to affect our organs like our heart or something. We know that's not good. That's a concern and that a doctor shows to us. When we're wondering, what's good? What's bad for me?

[16 : 38] What am I meant to do in life? We go to the doctor. We seek advice. But Jesus here is concerned not about our physical health, but about our spiritual health.

He's seeing a people who are confused, who have little direction in their life, who don't know where to go, what to turn to. They've got a longing, but they don't know where to look. Well, Jesus is saying, this is where you're to look. Look to me. Because he has a great concern for us. You see this in verse 33 to 35.

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, sir, give us this bread always. 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. And so there is the answer. In their confusion, in their muddle, in their wondering which direction to go in, Jesus is saying, I am the bread of life.

[17 : 50] Have your focus on me. If you have a pet, or if you, maybe a dog, any time there's food on the go, the dog is going to appear, suddenly seems to appear out of nowhere, and just looks at you longingly for some of that food.

I'm sure many of you have experienced that. Well, a famous Christian in the past, a man called Martin Luther, who lived many years ago, but he was a strong Christian in many ways. But he said he often learned from his dog. He said, oh, if I only could pray the way this dog watches the meat. All his thoughts are concentrated on that piece of meat. He has no other thought, wish, or hope. And he was saying, that's the way I wish I could come to God in prayer. Because we're so often distracted. We're so often led away. We're so often our longings are pulled in different directions. But Jesus is saying here, narrow it in. Don't get distracted by other things.

[18 : 56] I am the bread of life. I am the one who is able to satisfy you. And so there is where he takes him.

All who take the bread in this world is a bread that perishes. But if we come and take of him who is the bread of life, he gives us guarantees for eternity. And so is your focus, is your longing on him. That is where we are to go. Because then thirdly, we see if that is the case, we find ourselves as a people living. A people living for him. Do you believe that every meal that you eat each day keeps you alive? Of course you do. Because that's why you eat. You don't come to the conclusion and say, I've had enough. We can feel so full after a big meal and say, oh, I won't have to eat again for days.

[20 : 02] But within hours, you're going into the cupboard for something else to eat. Because that's the way we are. We eat, but we need more. We need more. We cannot go on. We stop eating. We die. Do you say the same about Jesus though? I can't live without him? Or are you saying, I can live without him? Which is it? If you say, I can live without him, you'll realize perhaps when it's too late that you can't. but the word of God here is showing us that in him we can live.

This is what we see in verse 41 and 42. They had this attitude of we can manage without Jesus. The Jews grumbled about him and said, 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? Is this not just an ordinary man? Is this not just someone who's not that important? That's the way we can be with Jesus.

[21 : 12] We can say he's not that important to us. Or we can see that he is truly important to us. That we cannot live without him.

The bread of this world as it says, bread that perishes, bread that doesn't satisfy, is just like chasing after the wind. We cannot catch it.

We cannot find it. It never satisfies. In Greek mythology, there was a man called King Tantalus. And he was punished by being chained.

Where he was chained, there was a lake and the lake would rise up to his chin. And any time he put his chin down to get a drink of water, the lake would subside. The water would subside away.

And above him was a tree with branches with fruit that was just dropping down to him. But any time he would reach up his hand to get some of that fruit that branch would lift away, he could never get it.

[22 : 16] King Tantalus was his name. And that's where we get the word tantalize from. Something that is tantalizing is something that is so close that we can almost feel it, we can almost touch it, but we just can't get it.

And that's what chasing after things in this life is like so often. We're looking for satisfaction, we're looking for fulfillment in so many different things.

It's teasing us, it's tantalizing, but we cannot reach it, we cannot touch it. There's a frustration. Well, Jesus is here to show us that it's not just tantalizing for us, but that it's truth, that it's real, that it's something that we can have.

A Savior who can give eternal life is not just something teasing, it's not just something tantalizing, it's a reality of what we read here in this passage.

In verse 37, Jesus says, all that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes I will never cast out. You're saying, but I'm not good enough for it.

[23 : 28] Well, Jesus says, come, come, trust, believe, repent of your sins and turn to me and I will never cast you out, I will never put you away. In verse 40, for this is the will of my Father that whoever looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life.

That is the promise that you have in his word. It's not just tantalizing, it's truth. In verse 47 and 48, truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life, I am the bread of life.

Will you not come to him today? That's the question for us. Are you laboring today? Are you longing today?

These two things so often go hand in hand. We're working, we're laboring away for something that does not satisfy. We're longing for something to fulfill us, to give us that true satisfaction in life.

While Jesus is saying, I am the bread of life. You will find fulfillment, you will find satisfaction with me.

[24 : 48] We all need food. food. We will all have enjoyed food this morning. We will all go and enjoy food after this service.

We will all go on laboring. We will all go on longing. But what's fulfilling us? What's helping us live? We need Jesus because Jesus is the bread of life.

life. Why do you labor for that which perishes instead of what endures to eternal life? That is what Jesus is leading us to.

And may he lead you today and in all the days ahead. May he lead you to know the wonder of him as the one who satisfies that longing, the one who fulfills all that laboring by living for him who is the bread of life.

Let's just bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you that your word speaks, that your word guides us and helps us.

[25 : 58] We thank you, Lord, that you remind us of what our lives are like so often, of how we labor and how we long for so much in this world. But we pray to find that sense of life and living in you as the bread of life.

May we know it, experience it and touch it and know the reality of it day by day as we seek your good upon us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We're going to conclude by singing again to God's praise this time in Psalm 34. You'll find it on page 247 of the Psalm books, the Scottish Psalter version.

Psalm 34 verse 8. We'll sing three verses to verse 11. The tune is St. David. Again, this Psalm just reminds us where to come and find that goodness of God.

Oh, taste and see that God is good, who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God is saints, and not in fear shall be with want oppressed. We'll sing from verse 8 to 11 to God's praise.

[27 : 05] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. O taste and see that God is good, who trusts in him is blessed.

Fear God is safe, none that him fear shall be with want to press.

The lions young may agree be, and they may lack their burden, but they that truly seek the Lord shall not lack any good.

O children hither do ye come and unto me give ear.

I shall you teach to understand how ye the Lord should hear.

[28 : 47] We'll close with a benediction, and after that I'll go to the main door. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. .