

Jesus - The Bread Of Life

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[0 : 00] Now let's turn together to John chapter 6, and we'll read again from verse 47. We'll look at verses 48 to 51, but let me just read from verse 47 through to verse 59.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

[1 : 17] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died.

Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Whoever feeds on this bread, Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum. I am the bread of life.

This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. I've already mentioned on other occasions how in John's Gospel there's a very close connection between the miracles of Jesus, which John calls signs, and the speeches or discourses of Jesus as you find them throughout the Gospel of John.

In fact, the structure of John's Gospel, most of it is largely about the miracles or the signs of Jesus connected to the speeches or the discourses of Jesus, or sermons, if you like, that are so closely tied up with the signs that he actually performed.

[2 : 44] And it's a way of presenting to us the identity of Jesus and the work of Jesus, as you find both of these, his identity and his work, displayed in the signs, which are accompanied then by teaching about himself and about his work, about his relationship to the Father and why he's come into the world.

And you'll find that in chapter 6, for example, the one we're looking at today, because here is a sign, the feeding of these 5,000 people, where you find that at the beginning of the chapter, the first part of the chapter, which we didn't read through. But that's where you find the sign recorded.

That's where you find details of the miracle. That's immediately followed by Jesus then teaching them about himself as the bread of life, and why he's in the world, and what that bread that he is, imparts to those who trust in him, that he is the source of life to them.

And that whoever eats of that bread, in other words, who comes to partake of Jesus spiritually, is actually someone who has eternal life already, who possesses the life that Jesus came to give to his people.

That's why here you find him emphasizing so many times in the chapter, I am the bread of life. I am the bread which came down from heaven. And I am the living bread.

[4 : 14] My Father gives you the true bread from heaven, which is in himself, which is in Jesus himself. So I want to look at two things from this chapter. And we're doing this today in preparation, really, or in thoughts towards the Lord's Supper next Lord's Day.

This evening we're going to look at chapter 10 of John, where another of these I am sayings of Jesus is found. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep.

So the two studies will be connected together, but also towards preparation for the Lord's Supper. So the two things for this particular study, first of all, the food that perishes, which he himself refers to there in verse 27, where he says to them, don't labor or do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

In other words, the food that he is as the bread of life. What he's saying there is, don't labor for the food which perishes. Instead of that, the alternative to that, set your mind, set your labor upon this living bread, this Jesus himself.

Food that perishes. We'll need to look at that because it's contrasted, secondly, with the food that provides life, this bread of life that is in Jesus himself, that is Jesus himself.

[5 : 36] And so largely through the chapter, you find a contrast between that bread, which is ordinary bread, if you like, natural bread, the food that perishes, and the food that provides life.

The two main points for us, the food that perishes, and alternatively, the food that provides life. Life. As we said, there's a contrast between the two, because in verses 27, right through to 59, you find a contrast there, consistently set out by Jesus, between natural and spiritual bread, if you like.

They followed him across to the other side of the sea, and when they found him, they said, Rabbi, when did you come here? And immediately, as is often the case, Jesus did not answer the question that they had asked, because he knew that was not the important thing.

He actually set out, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. He's saying to them, your mind is focused upon the ordinary bread, the natural bread, the physical bread that you ate when I gave you that bread in feeding the 5,000.

And you're following me because you saw that, because your mind is upon things at that level. But don't labor, he says, for that, but for the food that endures to eternal life.

[7 : 01] In other words, what Jesus is doing in this discourse and through this miracle, is holding together for a side-by-side, what you can call material life, as against eternal life or spiritual life.

Material life, you could say, is life in the ordinary sense, life that we all possess, life as human beings, life materially, life in this world as we have it.

And as we well know, you can have that, but not have the other life that he's speaking of, this eternal life, this spiritual life, the life that comes from a living connection with Jesus.

And it's that that he is drawing these people, these people's minds to, as he comes to set out the contrast between material life and eternal life.

And let's apply that. Let's see how that actually applies in practice, in our own situation, and in the lot of human beings in general. Well, most people, if not everybody in the world, is in some way or other looking for satisfaction, for fulfillment, for security.

[8 : 16] And it's not that people aren't looking for that. They are looking for that. You and I are looking for that. We're made in such a way, that we actually have within us, that desire for fulfillment, for security, for knowing that we are in fact loved, that we are in fact looked after, that we have security.

But the problem is, not that people are not looking for that, but that they prefer every other kind of security to the one that's in Jesus, to the ultimate, to the perfect security, to the lasting security, and the fulfillment that comes through knowing Jesus Christ.

You are, he says, following me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your loaves. Labor not for the food, which perishes. Labor not, stop not at the food, which is just material life.

Labor for that food, that is spiritual. And, when we live in the kind of circumstances, we live in today, I needn't tell you this, you know this yourselves very well, but I have to remind myself of it, because the influence, the influence of the world as it is, in its material existence, is so powerful, and so compelling for so many people.

And even for us as Christians, that world is seeking all the time to suck us back into its ways, and into its way of thinking, back towards seeing life as, no more than just on the material level.

[9 : 46] Well, as Jesus is saying to us, always, always remember, that life does not consist, in the things of this material world, this material level. It has to be an eternal life, in the life spiritually, that comes through Christ himself.

Our society, by and large, is scunnered with Jesus. Scunnered of the gospel.

Tired of this emphasis, that we give, on life in Jesus Christ, on the claims of Christ, on the requirements of God, on the provision of God, on the promises of God, on all that the gospel, really sets before us.

That's not what people want. That's not what people's heart, is set upon. You can see that, how it's illustrated here, in verses 60, if you go forward to verse 60, there when many of his disciples, heard it.

That's when, Jesus was really emphasizing, that you actually need, to eat the flesh, of the son of man, and drink his blood. Now he didn't mean that, naturally of course. That's not what offended them. They knew that, that was impossible.

[10 : 58] That wasn't cannibalism, he was talking about. What he was talking about, was actually, partaking of Christ himself, having their trust in him, accepting him, and accepting his claims, as to who he was, and what he was in the world, to do.

They dismissed that, they didn't like that, they found that unpalatable. They found that food, the bread of life, unpalatable. So, this is a hard saying, who can accept it, who can listen to it.

And then, verse 66, after this, many of his disciples, turned back, and no longer, walked with him. Now remember, the word disciples there, doesn't mean, always people, who are absolutely committed, to Jesus, spiritually committed, they are just, followers of Jesus, and these were following him, when they saw the miracles, that he was doing.

They were attracted, by the signs, as he himself said. But it didn't, didn't go any deeper, than that for them. So, when it came to the point, that they were challenged, that they needed to commit, their lives to Jesus, and have Jesus himself, in charge of their life, they would have to partake of him, they would find their life, in him, they turned away from him.

They found that unpalatable, this is food, that they just didn't, want to eat. And that's very similar, to Israel, isn't it, in the Old Testament. You remember, in Numbers, chapter 21, and other occasions, as well, but if you go to Numbers, chapter 21, and verse 5, especially there, you'll find, that the people, came to Moses, and they started, complaining about their lot.

[12 : 35] Why had he taken them, out of Egypt? Why had they ever left Egypt, to go into this wilderness? Is it just so that, we would die in this wilderness? We have nothing, in this wilderness. And then they said, our soul, loathes this manna.

I see the connection, with chapter 6 of John, because they're saying, these people, who came to him, the Jews, who came to him, our fathers, ate manna, in the desert. What sign, do you do?

Is it going to be, similar to Moses? And that's why, he's able then, to say, well Moses, actually didn't give you, the true bread, from heaven, the living bread, from heaven. My father did. My father has done that.

I am, that bread. And in many respects, that's where we are, as a people. Israel preferred, or said, they preferred, the life of Egypt, to what they had, in the desert, with Moses, with the manna, that God had given them.

Angels bread, as the psalmist called it. Imagine that, preferring, something other, than what God, had specially provided, for their sustenance.

[13 : 47] Something that, nobody else, no other people, had ever seen, or tasted before. And yet, they said, we wish we were, back in Egypt. What were they in Egypt? They were slaves in Egypt.

They were mistreated, in Egypt. They were brutalized, in Egypt. And there they are, saying, that life was better, than the life we have, here in the desert, with this manna, which our soul loathes.

That's where we are, as a people, in this country. We've forgotten, our heritage. We've lost sight, of the fact, that our true riches, and our security, and our fulfillment, does not come, from economics.

Does not come, from politics. It doesn't come, from things, which are, on the human level, just this material world. It comes from heaven. It comes from God. It comes through the gospel. It came in the past, through the gospel.

We've turned away, from that. And we're turning away, from it still. Look at all the, discussions, that are taking place, at the moment, in political circles, as to where our future lies, as a country.

[14 : 46] Not much about God, and it is there, on either side, whether it's the EU, or this country. And what happened, to these people of Israel? What happened, at that occasion?

Well, God sent, fiery, serpents, among them. Of course, people in the, day we live, will just dismiss that, as just a story, as just a, an invention, of the times.

But of course, Jesus himself, believed that. Because you find, in John's gospel, that, in chapter 3, where he says, as Moses lifted up, the serpent, in the wilderness, even so, must the Son of Man, be lifted up, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.

God sent, fiery, poisonous, serpents, among the people, and many died, until God showed, Moses, that, if he made a serpent, serpent of brass, or bronze, and lifted it up, on the pole, whoever looked towards it, would die.

It looked a foolish thing, it looked a stupid thing. How on earth, was that going to save anybody? That's what people are saying, of the gospel. How can a death, that happened thousands of years ago, how is that going to save anybody nowadays?

[15 : 58] How does that fit in, with the world in which we live? Well, God is saying, this is what I have done. This is the bread of life. And there are always consequences, for rejecting God.

It's so hard, to get through to people. It's hard to get through to ourselves, till God shows us, isn't it? But if you look at our state, as a society, you'll see the damaging effects, of rejecting God's food, and just living on the level, of this material world.

An increase, in so many things, that are damaging people's lives. Increase, in drives for, euthanasia.

Increase, in abortions. Increase, in gender confusion. Increase, in pressure, on our schools, to include, LGBT teaching.

Imagine the teachers, that actually have to, teach our children, in school, and are being given, this, ultimatum, virtually, if it goes through, this proposal, from the Scottish government, this will be something, taught to each child, in each school, in Scotland.

[17 : 13] free speech, more and more, under threat. Where's all that from?

It comes from, rejecting God, God's standard, God's ways, God's word, God's food. And we think, we're really, as a people, we think, we're really, living it up.

And the people, in government, that largely, most of them, at least in government, think we're living it up, and they're living it up. But the food, of this material world, is delicious, and it's what everybody, should eat.

Spiritually, we're starving. We're skeletons. We need, the bread, of life. Labor not, for the food, which perishes, but for that, which the Son of Man, will give you.

So that's briefly, the food that perishes, the way Jesus, emphasizes it there. Life on the material, level only, leaving God out of it, not accepting Christ, for who he is.

[18 : 26] That's what he was saying, to them. This is how we can apply it, in our own particular, situation, today. Life without God. Life just lived, on that ordinary level.

But secondly, the food that provides, life. What he says here, in verse 47, I say to you, whoever believes, has eternal life, I am the bread of life.

Your fathers, ate the manna, in the wilderness, and, they, died. See, they're asking, what sign, are you going to do? Are you going to do a sign, similar to what Moses did?

If you did something, like Moses did, we would come and believe you, we would follow you, we would put ourselves, in your hands. They had forgotten, of course, that Israel grumbled, against Moses, many times. And what he says is, well, this is the bread, which came down from heaven, so that one may eat of it, and not die.

Not like your fathers, in the desert. Now you think, of bread, and how basic it is, how basic it is, to our human life, in the ordinary sense.

[19 : 38] Most of our homes, if not all of us, have bread, every day, pretty much. It's a basic commodity, it's a basic food. And, it's illustrative, of our basic need, as human beings, the need to have, spiritual life, in Jesus Christ.

When you go to, places in the world today, where food is not, plentiful, indeed, where there's famine, you go to Yemen today, you don't find people, crying out, give us bread.

Give us bread. Give us our basic necessities. We're dying, for want of basic, food commodities. That's what they will say to you. They're not just doing luxuries.

They want the basic stuff, to keep them alive. Sadly, it's not readily available, to them, or many others. And, it's the same, with regard, to our spiritual need.

Our basic need, is the bread of life. Christ, Jesus, the Savior, salvation, eternal life, forgiveness of sin, acceptance with God, righteousness.

[20 : 47] Every single one of these, is in Christ. They're all, if you like, ingredients, in this bread of life. That Jesus, himself is, that God, the Father, has provided for us, having sent him into the world, for this very purpose, to be the bread of life, to us.

Christ is, God's provision. You see, then verse 32, you look at verse 32, where he says there, Jesus said, truly, this is after I'm saying, about Moses, what work do you perform?

Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses, who gave you, the bread from heaven, but my Father, gives you, the true bread, from heaven.

That little word, true, makes all the difference, in that verse. Because that word, true, literally means, something that has, in it, not just truth, but heavenliness.

The way Jesus uses this word, in the gospel of John, the way John himself used it, it really means, divine, or having the qualities, of heaven about it. And that word, really captures for us, this bread, and how it's so different, to the material bread, to life on the material level.

[22 : 01] This is from heaven, this has heaven about it, this has the substance, of heaven in it. I am the bread, which came down from heaven. This is the living bread, that came down from heaven.

In verse 51, if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This is bread, in a way that, is different, to every other, source of sustenance.

Because this is, spiritual bread, this is the bread, that came from heaven, that has heavenliness, in it, that's its quality. I don't know, I was, as a youngster, I was brought up, on stag bread, stag plain bread, still my favorite, right?

Probably some of you as well. Still available. I still have, thoughts about, my younger days, as a child, as a youngster, growing up, where my mother, would buy, plain bread, uncut.

She would set about, cutting it with a knife, and of course, big, big chunks of it, you didn't get small slices. You spread it then, with butter, and whatever else you put on it, and delicious, you still, my mind still goes back to that.

[23 : 04] Well, that was, for me, something in the ordinary sense, that had such special quality about it. That's just ordinary bread. There are many alternatives, to stag plain bread, but it's still my favorite.

There are many alternatives, to Jesus. None of them has this quality. It doesn't matter, whether you go to Islam, to Mormonism, to Judaism itself, to Buddhism, to secularism, whatever isms in the world, you come across, there are alternatives to Jesus.

This is not in them. None of them can say, I am the bread of life. Mohammed cannot say that, couldn't say that. Islam's teaching doesn't say that.

None of these alternative religions, or ideologies, secularism itself. Only Jesus, can say this truthfully, I am, the bread of life.

And when you come to take that bread, it really does come to satisfy your soul. Your soul is made for that. And none of the other types of bread, available to you, will meet the needs of your life, and my life.

[24 : 29] This one will. This is the only one that will. But it meets it fully. I'm not saying that, there's a caveat here, there's something just to say, as a point in passing. Faith in Jesus, trust in Jesus, is not primarily about meeting a fulfillment in your life, or meeting a need in your life, that brings you fulfillment.

It's not primarily about satisfaction. It's not primarily about being fulfilled, or coming to know a fulfilled life. There is that to it. I'm not dismissing that.

It's an important aspect of our human life. Many people have come to Christ through the fact, that they just weren't getting fulfillment anywhere else. And eventually they came to the conclusion, there is fulfillment only in Jesus.

And they found that to be true. But it's not all about fulfillment. It's not even primarily about fulfillment. Why should you place your trust in Jesus? It's so that you can be what God intended you to be.

What God designed you for. What God created you for. What God requires your life to be like to His glory.

[25 : 40] So that you can glorify God. So that you live to the praise of God. So that your life will indeed be a life that brings Him praise and honor and glory.

That's why it's important. That's the primary thing about faith in Christ. It brings you into the possession of that life that is pleasing to God.

That meets the standard of God. Of which God says, this is very good. The bread of life.

Where is your own source of satisfaction? On what level are you living your life? How am I living my life? Where do I receive my satisfaction from?

Mainly. Is it from Christ? Is it from Jesus? Is it from God? On what level am I living my life? Am I just living for this world and in this world?

[26 : 46] Am I living on the material level? Or am I going beyond that? Through faith in Christ have I come to possess eternal life? Is the main desire of my heart to please God?

To meet His requirements? To glorify Him? To bring Him praise? These are the questions that lie behind this emphasis of Jesus Himself as the bread of life.

I am the bread. Which if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread I will give, for the life of the world is my flesh.

Well, just as a final point, the food that provides life is the bread of life. It's in Jesus. But the chapter emphasizes, and these verses themselves have an emphasis in part on that.

If you look at verse 35, Jesus said, I am the bread. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

[27 : 51] Then go to verse 47. Truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. And then you go to verse 51, where it says, I am the living bread.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. So you find coming to Him, believing in Him, eating Him, eating of this bread.

The three actions, if you like, the three things that are tied together, that you mustn't separate from each other. There's coming to Jesus.

There's believing in Jesus. There's eating of this bread. There's partaking of Jesus. There's spiritually partaking of the life that is in Him. And that's what gives you really total security, because each of these are tied to living forever.

Verse 51 there, verse 40, you find the same emphasis. That's your total security, as you find in verse 37 as well, where you find there the emphasis on living forever. Whoever comes to me will actually eat of this bread.

[28 : 58] He will never be cast out. Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. Some people think of that as, when you come to Jesus, what this is saying is that, He's not going to refuse to accept you.

Well, that is true, but that's not what this text is saying. Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. It's not saying, I will never refuse to receive you. What it's saying is, once I have received you, I will never cast you out again.

You will never again be without security. You will never again be outside of, where you're safe, where you're fulfilled, where you glorify God.

And that's why, he mentions too in verse 40 there, I will raise him up on the last day. Resurrection, is part of that life, part of that security, part of that relationship with God.

That belongs to those who've come to him, who believe in him, that's trusting in him, and who eat of him, who partake daily of him, who draw their life from him, who have spiritual life in them, from Jesus himself.

[30 : 10] And that's why he says, as the bread of life, we must come to him, we must believe in him, we must eat of him. And that's where we come, to connect it especially with the Lord's Supper, because the Lord's Supper is, physically a drinking, of the cup, and an eating of the bread.

If you look at the remarkable language you find, in verse 51, right through to verse 56, this is Jesus saying, after the question that's been asked, how can this man give us his flesh to eat?

So he says, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life.

And I will raise him up, on the last day, for my flesh is through food, and my blood is through drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh, and drinks my blood, abides in me, and I in him.

Now of course he didn't mean, as we said earlier, that that was going to be something, literally done. Nor does it mean, that coming, to take the Lord's Supper, to take the communion, is itself, the source of life to us.

[31 : 19] Jesus is. The Lord's Supper, does not itself, save anybody. But it's an important seal, for those who are saved.

It doesn't save anybody, but it's an important seal, and confirmation, to those who are saved. That as they do this, it confirms to themselves, that they are indeed, spiritually eating, of the bread of life, that is Jesus, and drinking his blood, in the sense of, drawing their spiritual nourishment, and strength, from him.

That's why, the Lord's Supper, must never be treated, as an optional extra. If you're here today, and you've never taken, communion, think of it, in terms of, what Jesus himself, says about it.

This is my body, which is broken for you. This cup, is the new covenant, in my blood. And how that's tied up, with, what it represents to us, the actual death, of Jesus.

And how it's from that death, we said to the children, that we draw, our spiritual life. So don't treat it, as something extra, optional for you.

[32 : 51] Even if you're not yet, a communicant, don't say, of this today, this is just, for those who are advanced, in the relationship, with God, and I'm not there yet.

Well, maybe that's true. But put it, to yourself today, as something, that you have to aim at. Something to aspire to. Something to set, before you, as a target, if you like.

Because it is important. And it does confirm, for those who are saved, that this indeed, is the case. They are partaking of, the Jesus, who's represented, by the bread, and the wine.

So it's not to be treated, as an optional extra. That's why I've given you, a quotation from, Matthew Henry's great book, The Communicant's Companion. And I really, commend that book to you, if you don't have it, still available.

The Communicant's Companion. How you prepare, for the Lord's Supper. How you partake, of the Lord's Supper. What you do after, the Lord's Supper. A wonderful book. Wonderful, simple to read, full of spiritual, nourishment, full of advice, full of wonderful teaching.

- [34 : 02] But put in a very plain way. Well, this is what he says, in one of the chapters there. Concerning those, who are reluctant, about coming, to take the Lord's Supper, who should be at the table, but have not yet done so.

Judge not, amiss, concerning this ordinance. It was instituted, for your comfort. Let it not be a terror to you. You say you are unworthy to come.

So were all who ever came. Not worthy to be called children, nor to eat of the children's bread. In yourselves there is no worthiness, but is there none in Christ?

Is he not worthy, and is he not yours? Have you not chosen him? Let faith in his mediation, silence all your fears.

You say you dare not come, lest you should eat and drink judgment to yourselves. But ordinarily those who most fear that, are least in danger of it.

- [35 : 02] That dreadful word judgment, was not intended to drive people from the sacrament, but to drive them from their sins. Come then, he says, and seal the covenant with God.

This is the bread of life, which came down from heaven, which if a person eats of, he shall never die.

May God bless these thoughts to us. Let's pray. Help us, Lord, we pray, to be mindful of the richness of your provision in the gospel, in the sacraments, in the Lord's Supper.

Help us to be mindful of them so that we may come and partake of them. Lord, encourage us to do so if our relation with you is one in which we trust in you, in which we have received you as the bread of life, which we draw our strength from you.

Lord, help us to confirm it by coming to do this in remembrance. of you. Receive our worship, we pray now. Cleanse us from all our sin, for Christ's sake. Amen.

- [36 : 14] Well, we're singing now in conclusion from Psalm 65, 65 on page 297, verses 4 to 5 in the tune of Dunfermline.

Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose and makest approach to thee, that he within thy courts, O Lord, may still a dweller be. We surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace and with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy place.

Verses 4 to 5 on page 297. Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose. Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose and makest approach to thee, that he within thy courts, O Lord, may still our dweller be.

We surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace, and with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy place.

O God of our salvation, thou with thy righteousness, by fearful works unto the rich, thine answer dost express.

- [38 : 12] O Lord, therefore the ends of all the earth, and those afar that be, upon the sea their confidence, O Lord, will place in thee.

I'll go to the main door after the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen.