The Bread of Life

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[0:00] John chapter 6.

John chapter 6. We'll be in verses 22 through 40 tonight.! Now, just to give you a little context where we're at in our text, Jesus has just fed the 5,000, one of the big signs that He has performed in the Gospel of John.
And through every miracle in the Gospel of John, you always need to be asking yourself one question, which is, what is John trying to teach us about Jesus? What is John trying to tell us about who Jesus is and what He has come to do?
Because that is the whole point of the Gospel of John, is he wants his readers to know who Jesus is and why they should believe in Him. So at this point in John's life, when he's writing this Gospel, he's an old man.
He probably sees the end of his earthly life coming, and he wants to pass on what is most important to those that are going to read this Gospel. So in John chapter 20, just to give you some idea of why he wrote the Gospel, he said, So as we look at this passage today, I want you to be asking the question, who is Jesus trying to say that He is?
[1:40] Be asking that question as we read about this great sign, as we read about this discussion that He is having with this crowd that has followed Him after the feeding of the 5,000. So we're looking at the aftermath of this great miracle here.

So John chapter 6, starting in verse 22. It says, So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum seeking Jesus.
When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, Rabbi, when did you come here? That's a pretty good question. They saw Jesus depart from His disciples.
They didn't see Him get in the boat and cross the sea. So they're wondering, how did He get to Capernaum? They don't know that Jesus doesn't need a boat to go on water. So anyway, Jesus walked on the water in between these two events.
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 the loaves.
[2:59] Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal.

Then they said to Him, What must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.
So they said to Him, Then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written.
He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then 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.
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.
[3:57] 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. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet you do not believe.

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
And this is the will of Him who sent Me, 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.

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This is the Word of the Lord. So here we have Jesus again. He's in front of a lot of confused people. They've just seen this great sign that Jesus performed.
He's fed the 5,000 with very little food. And honestly, when you look back at what was really going on here, they only counted men in that 5,000 number. So really we're looking anywhere between 10,000 to 20,000 people that Jesus has fed with this food.
[5:09] So these people, they have followed Him to the other side of the sea to try and just figure out who Jesus is, what He's really here doing. Now again, we go back to the question, what is Jesus trying to show us about Himself?

And the main idea is this, that Jesus is our true hope for eternal life. Jesus is our true hope for eternal life. I said earlier to ask the questions of the signs that Jesus performs, what is He trying to teach us through the sign?
Because they are signs because they point to something. They are trying to point to something about Jesus. He's trying to teach us something through these signs. They're not just cool tricks that He does along with His lessons.
There's a deeper meaning behind all of these. Now, why was this such a struggle for these people to understand? Because every time we see Jesus speaking on heavenly matters, you see people like the Pharisees.
You see people like these confused Jews in this crowd that are trying to interpret heavenly matters through earthly means. They're trying to get things in a realm that they understand.
[6:22] I just have to imagine the confused expressions that were on their face. They probably looked a lot like me when Pastor Mike speaks about sports metaphors to me. You all should sit in our staff meeting.

It's great. But again, it's because they're trying to understand heavenly truths from an earthly mindset. They wanted the kingdom to be something that was born in this world when this kingdom is not of this world.
Nor is it something that we can attain through earthly means either. So what is it that Jesus is trying to teach us about the provision for eternal life that He gives us?
The first is this. It's that Jesus provides the food for eternal life. He provides the food for eternal life. So when the crowd starts showing up, I love what Jesus does.
He just kind of cuts right to the chase. He goes straight to the heart matter. He says here in verse 26, 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 the loaves.
[7:32] In other words, you ate your fill, you were impressed by it, and you want to see more. In other words, you've completely missed the point of everything that has just happened on the other side of the sea.

That sign was supposed to reveal something about Jesus, and it was completely lost on this crowd. And here's what always astounds me about situations like this. These people, they are coming to the right person.
They're going to the right source, but they're coming to Jesus with the wrong problems. It's like a sick person going to the doctor, but asking the doctor to change their oil.
You're going to the right person, but you're talking about the wrong problem here. They know they have needs. They see Jesus as powerful to meet those needs, but they're coming to Him for the wrong needs.
Jesus told them the things that you are looking for, they're not going to satisfy. They're not going to last. They're going to perish, and you're going to be right back to where you started.
[8:31] So what does Jesus mean by food that perishes? Basically, Jesus is speaking about their desire to have all of their temporal needs met.

Now again, these are people, they're wanting a Messiah that's going to bring in an earthly kingdom that's going to put Israel back on the map. They see that Jesus is good to provide food. They've seen that He's good to provide physical healing.
And these things aren't bad, but to Jesus' point, those are all temporary things that are not going to last. If you look back at verse 15, we see Jesus dealing with this same issue again.
Right after He fed the 5,000, it says that He withdrew from the crowd because He perceived that they were about to take Him by force and make Him king. So we see this mindset all the time creeping up into the people that are following Jesus waiting for something to happen.

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The people experience a divine sign, but they try to apply it in earthly ways. So rather than Jesus seeing Him for who He truly was, really all they saw was what they wanted.
[9:40] They just saw Him for the needs that He could meet. And that's what Jesus is trying to break these people away from. Saying, stop seeing me as a means to earthly ends and see me for what I can really provide, which is provisions for eternal life, citizenship into a kingdom that isn't going to fade, that isn't going to perish.

And we can take a lesson from this too. You know, we can look at the Jews here and kind of shake our heads, but honestly, it's easy for us to value Jesus based on our earthly circumstances too. You know, we can look at our trials and think that, man, this Jesus person, He really has it out for us.
Or we can look at the blessings. We can look at all the things that are going well in our life and we can think, wow, God is so good that He has given me all these things.
All the while forgetting that Jesus' love, His goodness, grace and mercy has already been displayed completely on the cross for us. You know, there was a pastor that once said, I can convert anyone if I can just find their felt need and speak to that.
Basically, he's boiled evangelism down to being a vacuum cleaner salesman. He couldn't have cheapened it anymore. Our only true need from God is salvation.
[11:04] And Jesus has already met that true need. So if you're ever wondering, does God see my needs? Can I really know that God cares for me, that God cares about meeting my greatest needs?

I want to answer that question with a question that you can ask yourself. Was the cross enough for me? Was the cross of Christ enough to know that God loves me and that He has met my need?
So going back to our story, Jesus tells the people to work for food that endures. Not to work for food that perishes, but to work for things that endure to eternal life.
And that God Himself has set His seal of approval on the Son of Man to meet those needs, to provide that food for eternal life. So the crowd, they asked the right question. They said, well, what's the work?
What's the work of God that we need to be performing to get this food for eternal life? I would be asking that question too if I was the crowd. Well, Jesus says this, and again, this is our second point about the provisions for eternal life.
[12:13] He says this, the food is received through belief. The food is received through belief. In verse 29, Jesus answered them, this is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent.

Belief. That's it. Now for these Jews, this was a very earth-shaking truth for them because remember, these are people whose religious and righteous pursuits all centered around works, sacrifices, things to eat, things to not eat, things to touch and not to touch, days that you should work, days that you shouldn't work, holidays that you were supposed to be observing.
Righteousness and being part of the kingdom of God was completely centered around their way of life, their heritage, and the location that they lived in, which was the promised land. And now Jesus comes along and says, it's not about these things.
It's not about the things that perish. It's about who you are believing in. We see Jesus have a similar conversation with another man several chapters earlier, Nicodemus.
He was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He was a man that knew the law inside and out. This was a man that the other Pharisees went to to learn from. And even he didn't understand this.
[13:32] And we see Jesus kind of at the pinnacle of this conversation. He said in John 3 verses 14 through 16, And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Now as soon as Jesus makes this bold claim, basically saying that you need to believe in Me, now the crowd catches that.
They're catching the fact that Jesus is saying, you need to believe in Me. I'm the one that God has sent. Believe in Me for the things that come with eternal life. Then the crowd asks Him. Or they really challenge Him.
It's like, well, we want another sign. You know, you just fed the 5,000, but we want another sign to back up what you're saying here. And to do this, they kind of throw Jesus' miracle back in His face. They try to minimize what He has just done. If you notice, as they're talking about Moses and the manna in the wilderness, they said, look, Jesus, You fed 5,000 people for one meal.

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[14:45] But we've got this guy, Moses, who 1,500 years ago, he fed an entire nation for 40 years with manna from heaven. So, what else you got?

Can you do anything like that? Now, Jesus, being an ever-patient teacher, He just kind of lays it out for him plain as day.
He says, Moses didn't give you this bread from heaven. That wasn't from Moses. That was provided by God. That act of salvation was from God. This act of salvation was not only an act of man or a prophet, but of God alone.
And the salvation that Jesus is talking about now, it is not going to be an act of man. It is something that God is providing Himself again in the form of Jesus Christ.
And it is received not by doing works, but through faith, through belief. just as the manna from heaven in the wilderness should have been received. But it wasn't.
[15:46] Now, the problem that this audience was having and that Israel has really had throughout their whole history is they lose focus on heavenly things by focusing on the perishable things.

For instance, 40 years in the desert, Israel received manna from heaven every single day, but they grumbled about it. They complained about it constantly. Victory after victory was handed over to the Israelites by God's hand.
And finally, whenever they had their earthly kingdom in the land of Canaan, the promised land, they completely forgot about the kingdom of heaven that they had been set aside as priests to the entire world for.
So they were always focusing on the earthly things, the earthly benefits, and forgetting about the heavenly promises that God had made them. And we see this playing out again.
Now, it can be easy for us to fall into the same trap. We have many needs and desires. And the problem we run into is oftentimes we see God just as a means to those ends.
[16:51] We only see God as the provider of our physical needs, forgetting all the while that His greatest provision that He's ever offered us is eternal life. Now, Jesus met so many physical needs in His ministry on earth.

I don't ever want to underplay what Jesus did in the lives of people through the physical needs that He met. He raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, He healed the sick, He cast out demons. These were all great things that Jesus did. But every time, it was always an avenue to share the greater truth, the greater provision that He had come to share, which was that the kingdom of God was at hand, that there could be eternal life in His name.
Your felt needs, they are not unimportant. But if you were wondering when God is going to finally show you His love for you, again, I go back to that same question.
Wasn't the cross enough? Wasn't the fact that your eternal debt has been removed from you enough? That is the bread from heaven that He is trying to offer to these people.
[18:02] It is a salvation that goes beyond the needs of this life and endures for all eternity. So what is this food that leads to eternal life?

I love kind of this back and forth thing of Jesus will say something and the crowd asks a question. Jesus answers a question and then they ask another question. They just ask, you know, what work do we need to do? Jesus says, believe.
So when Jesus says these things, the crowd responds, Sir, give us this bread always. Give us this bread always. Just like the woman at the well when Jesus was talking about living water, the living water that she needed, she said the same thing.
He said, Sir, give me this water always. When the people hear Jesus talk about matters of eternity, this is the reaction that He often gets because He's shown Himself as powerful.
He teaches as one who has authority. The miracles that He performed, they defy the laws of nature. It's something that only the Creator could do. And they see these amazing things.
[19:07] So when Jesus says things that involve matters of eternity, their curiosity gets piqued. They want to know more. And Jesus answers them by saying this, and this is the third provision.

Jesus is the food. He is the bread. Verses 35-40 again. 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 again. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet you do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me, I will never cast out.
For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up

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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.
[20:13] You know, we can just close with that Scripture reading right there. Jesus lays it out for them. Like, here is the truth, and here is how you respond to it.

The crowd demanded of Him, Sir, give us this bread always. And Jesus says, It's Me. I'm the bread. I am the true bread from heaven. I am the sustenance for eternal life that you need, and you receive nourishment for eternal life by believing in Me, the One that the Father has sent.
What Moses gave to the people, the manna from heaven, that was just typological, all pointing towards Christ. See, God provided the manna every single day for the people, but it needed to be re-provided.
Every day it was consumed, and the people were hungry again the next day. But now God has sent the new bread from heaven. Jesus Christ, His Son.
And Jesus tells the people what He will accomplish as the bread of life. As the bread of life, He would satisfy everyone's need for righteousness. The ability to be made right with God.
[21:22] That's what they've been scrambling for through every ritual that they perform, through every sacrifice they make, every holiday that's celebrated. All this was their appetite for righteousness, being manifested in works.

All the while, complete satisfaction is wrapped up in Jesus, the bread of life. If they would just believe in Him, they would never hunger or thirst again.
But there were so many people who had fallen short in this, and so many people that fall short today. I mean, look in verse 41, after Jesus had said these things.
This was the response of the crowd. So the Jews grumbled about Him, because He said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. So their response wasn't faith.
It was rejection. It was grumbling. They were grumbling about the bread of life, just like they grumbled about the manna that Moses provided for them. Not much has changed in the Jewish history up to this point.
[22:28] And just like bread is only filling if you eat it, Jesus' saving work is only effective if you believe in Him. So my question for you, if this is something that applies to you today, what is keeping you from saving faith in Jesus?

What is keeping you from saving belief in the Son of God, the bread of life? Are you wondering if you can be good enough on your own like these Jews were?
No. Jesus was good enough for you. Sins committed in the flesh can't be erased by good deeds of the flesh. That's not the way things work.
Separation from God must be bridged by righteousness from God. And Jesus Christ was that righteousness, still is that righteousness. As the bread of life, He satisfies your need for righteousness.
Now maybe you're wanting a sign from God, just like the crowd did in this story. Like, well, if God wants me to follow Him, I'm going to need an act of faith on God's part. He's going to have to show Himself faithful to me and take the first step before I'm willing to commit.
[23:40] The truth is He already has. We talked about it earlier. The cross is God's greatest display of provision for you. He won't do anything greater because there is nothing greater that He could do.

Next, are you wondering, is the blood of Christ really enough to cover my sins? I was listening to the testimony of a lady one time, and she was talking about her life just as an absolute heathen before coming to Christianity.
And she had told her daughter, who was earnestly trying to convert her, she said, there is not enough blood on that cross to cover my sins. And if that's you, as the bread of life, not only does Jesus completely satisfy your need for righteousness, but He satisfies God's need, His righteous need for justice and wrath to be displayed on sin.
The bread of life satisfies it all. Your need for righteousness will be filled. God's need for justice is satisfied through the bread of life being broken for you.
Let's pray. Father, I thank You that Jesus has come down as the true bread from heaven. Lord, I thank You that He has come to satisfy every need for righteousness, every need for eternal life.

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[25:14] It is all met in the person of Jesus Christ. Not in any works that we can do, not in anything that we bring to the table. It is all met in the person of Christ Jesus.

And Lord, as Jesus said in the text today, I pray that we would all have saving faith in Him. I pray that we would believe in the one that You have sent. Lord, that we would follow Jesus faithfully as Lord of our lives.
And Lord, as we enter into this time in communion, I pray that we would remember His body, the bread of life that was broken for us on the cross. I pray that we would reflect on the sacrifice that Jesus has made to satisfy all of our needs.
And I pray that we would marvel at Christ this evening. I pray for all these things. In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you.

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