

JOHN 6:41-51 – Feasting On The Living Bread

John 6:41-51

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me- not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 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.

At the beginning of John 6 we read about Jesus feeding the multitude. This is one of the few events recorded in all 4 gospels. And it’s likely that Jesus fed around 20,000 people.

So, a large group of hungry people is fed by miraculous provision of bread. Does that sound familiar to anyone?

It would have been familiar to the Jews. It would have immediately called to mind Exodus 16 where God caused manna to fall from heaven to feed the people of Israel in the wilderness.

Remember, the Israelites have been miraculously led out of Egypt. They’ve seen the power of God at work on their behalf. They’ve seen the Nile turned to blood, plagues of frogs and flies and gnats and locusts. They’ve seen a pillar of cloud lead them by day, and a pillar of fire by night. They’ve seen the Red Sea parted so that they could walk through it, and they’ve seen it swallow up the Egyptians and completely destroy their army. They’ve seen bitter, undrinkable water made sweet so that they could drink.

They’ve seen all this and so naturally their response is to grumble at God. God, couldn’t you do something for us? We’re hungry!

And in Exodus 16 God miraculously feeds them with bread from heaven. This would have been a favorite story for the Jews...one they told to their children and grandchildren.

So, Jesus has miraculously fed the multitude. He’s provided for their physical needs and satisfied their hunger. And many of them must have been thinking, maybe this is the messiah we’ve been waiting for!

You see, the Jews conception of the Messiah was not God incarnate come down from heaven to serve and give up his life. This was not what they were looking for.

Their idea of messiah was a great man, like Moses, a prophet, who would come and lead them out of captivity and who would provide for their needs and who would restore them as a great nation!

They saw Jesus and thought, he's feeding us just like Moses did! And they want more of that.

They want someone who will provide material comfort and safety and security.

But Jesus rebukes them in **verse 27** and says, do not work for the food that perishes (is that a word for us today?), but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

Jesus is saying, you think you know what you need, but you need me to tell you what you need!

My kids always want candy. And they are convinced that that is what they need. They are convinced that candy will satisfy their eternal needs. But it won't! And I know that. And I know what they do need...so they grumble at me.

Jesus says, Moses didn't give the true bread, the Father gives it.
And the Jews say, we want it! Give it to us!

And Jesus says, it's me! I'm the true bread from heaven. I'm the bread of life! Eat this bread and you will have satisfaction and salvation and eternal security and resurrection and eternal life! I am everything you need!!!

And that brings us to our text today.

The Jews are grumbling (Jews means the opposition party, not all Jews) because Jesus has just said he is the bread that comes down from heaven, and they don't believe him.

v. 41-42

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

They were saying, 'You didn't come down from heaven. We know your parents. We know where you came from.'

If Caleb Daniel showed up next week claiming he had come down from heaven we would say, 'I know your parents. I know where you came from. Is not this Caleb, the son of Randy, the son of Tonya?'

The claims Jesus was making did not fit their finite, human perceptions of reality and possibility, so they rejected him!

They were like, 'we just wanted a free lunch and now you're ruining it Jesus. We don't want to hear that you think you're God, we just want you to give us some bread.

And in the end they came to Jesus looking for so much less than he was actually offering.

He was offering them eternal life, eternal security, resurrection on the final day...and they were like, 'yeah, but what about more of that bread you made yesterday?'

Just like the Israelites in the wilderness. God miraculously rescued them from Egypt and desired to covenant Himself with them and they said, 'We just want some food. We want to be comfortable. Back in Egypt we had plenty of food. We don't want to enter the promised land and enjoy an eternal covenant with you, we just want to be safe.

God was offering so much more.

And what about us today? Are we perhaps looking to Jesus for much less than he has offered?

Jesus, I just want that promotion. I want to be healthier. I want that house. I want to marry that person. I just want to be able to have kids. I just want to be a more moral person and feel better about myself.

Jesus has so much more to offer you! He offers himself. He promises to never leave you, to shepherd you, to be merciful and kind and compassionate towards you, to exalt you, to rescue and redeem you, to make you a new creation, to resurrect and glorify you, to satisfy your deepest hearts desires so you'll never be hungry or thirsty again. He promises to never drive you away and that no one will ever be able to snatch you out of his hands.

But...what about some more of that bread, Jesus?

The people grumble about Jesus because he is claiming to have come down from heaven, and Jesus has an interesting response.

v. 43-44

Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

Why does Jesus say this?

If you'll remember earlier in John 6, immediately following the feeding of the multitude, we read that the people intended to take Jesus and forcefully make him their king.

The people have an agenda and Jesus is going to fit perfectly into that agenda in order to provide them with comfort and security and independence from Rome.

They were essentially coming to Jesus on their terms and telling him, 'this is how it's going to be. This is how we are going to be saved.'

And Jesus rebukes them. He says not only can you not come to me with your own agenda and on your own terms, but you can't come to me at all unless the Father draws you!

In other words, your only hope for salvation rests entirely and absolutely on the grace-filled drawing of the Father!

Did you ever wonder how you were saved? If we were truly dead in our sins like Scripture tells us we were (Eph 2:1) then how did we ever come to be not dead?

As humans we like to have a sense of control over our lives. Many of us assume that we were saved because we simply decided one day that we wanted to be. But how can a dead person decide they want to be resurrected?

2 Corinthians 4:6 helps us understand how we are saved.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I love this passage! Paul is telling us how we were saved. And he alludes to creation. The world was without form and void and covered in darkness. And then God said, 'let there be light!'

He spoke new creation into being!

And that's what he's done in the hearts of Christians. He looked at your dark heart, dead in sin and said, 'let there be light'. And he spoke new creation into being by revealing to you the glory of Jesus!

We see what this looks like in the apostle Paul's conversion in Acts 9.

Paul wasn't looking for Jesus. In fact he was on a campaign to get rid of anyone who was a follower of Jesus.

He's on the road to Damascus to go persecute the church when all of a sudden he's surrounded by a bright light, and Jesus reveals himself to him and shows him his glory, and from that moment on he was never the same again!

God saw Saul's dark and sinful heart and he said 'let there be light.'

That's how you and I were saved. By the sovereign grace of God alone!

You and I were like Lazarus. We were dead...until God in his mercy said, 'come forth!'

And those whom the Father draws to the Son will be raised on the last day. And that's a promise!

This is what **Romans 8:30** is saying.

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

This is an amazing passage, which gives me much hope and comfort. Those God has chosen (or drawn) will be justified, or made righteous. And if you have been justified then you will be glorified (receive a resurrection body). Paul is speaking of glorification as if it's already happened, that is how sure he is of our security in Jesus!

Which is why he can say in **Philippians 1:6** – **And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.**

This should be a most precious promise to you that gives you hope in all circumstances and empowers you to persevere in your faith.

So the Jews grumble, and Jesus rebukes them. He makes it clear that they have no power on their own to be saved. They don't get to approach him on their terms. They are completely dependent on him for everything. They have to be taught by the Father about Jesus. They have to have God's law written on their hearts, as Jeremiah puts it.

Then Jesus repeats what he's already said and expounds on it in **v. 47-51**
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.

Previously Jesus has said that those who come to him and eat the bread of life will never be hungry or thirsty again. Jesus will satisfy all of their needs. But now he takes it even further by saying that whoever eats of the bread of life will live forever!

This is ultimately what Jesus came to offer. Himself as living bread, that whoever believes in him might have eternal life!

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve ate the fruit in an act of independence from God. And they died. And ever since then, we have been eating and dying. Nothing has given us the life we lost in Genesis 3. Even the heavenly manna in the wilderness didn't ultimately bring life.

But Jesus came to destroy the curse of sin and death instituted in the garden. Jesus, whom all the signs were pointing to, came as the true and living bread, and if you eat of him, you will not only be satisfied, but you will live forever!

And the bread that Jesus offers is his flesh! Jesus is saying that he will save and satisfy sinners by dying for them.

Jesus dies, so that you and I can live eternally!

And our work, our part, is not to work to earn the bread...our work is to feast on the bread freely offered to us!

Remember that Jesus tells us not to work for the food that perishes, but to work for the food that gives eternal life. And the work is to believe in Jesus!

And when we're told to believe, that's not a one-time thing you do when you say a prayer and get baptized. That's something you do day after day after day.

To believe in Jesus is to feast on him daily. To treasure him and his precious promises. To honor and glorify him in all things. To delight in the crucified, resurrected and glorified King!

That's what it means to eat the bread of life! And if you eat that bread, you won't die in the wilderness...you'll live forever!

Jesus is the living bread who gives life to the world, but we are not capable of coming to him on our own. Jesus says that we can only come to him if the Father draws us or calls us.

This has been a troubling passage for many people over the years, but I want to close today telling you why this truth is precious to me.

First, it humbles us. We brought nothing to the table. Our salvation had nothing to do with us. Therefore there are no grounds for boasting, except to boast in Jesus, and his death and resurrection!

Second, it gives me the utmost confidence that I'm saved and that I'll stay saved. If my salvation is not dependent on me, but on Christ, then keeping my salvation is not dependent on me either. And Jesus promises in John 10 that no one will ever snatch us out of his hand!

Third, this truth that we can only come to Jesus by the grace-filled drawing of God, gives me tremendous hope for the lost. You see those names on that board? It's not up to me to be smart or cunning enough to convince them about Jesus. No matter how far gone you think some of those people are, the power of God is able to draw anyone to Jesus! And that gives me hope to persevere in prayer!

And finally, this truth glorifies the triune God! When we get to heaven, we won't be high-fiving Jesus saying, 'we did it!' We'll be falling at his feet in worship saying, 'you did it!'

And we will feast on the bread of life forever! But here's the good news...we don't have to wait until heaven to start feasting. Let's start today!