

Primary Text:

22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 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. 25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” 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. 27 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.” 28 Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” 29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” 30 So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” 32 Jesus then 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. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” 34 They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” 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. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 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. 40 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.”

John 6:22-40

This is God’s Word.

Prayer:

Father, you are holy and worthy of honor, we praise you, we put our trust in you. We ask that your will would be done through the hearing of your word today. We ask that your kingdom would be expanded in the hearts of your children, may those who do not know you come to know you. Father, we confess that we have been among the crowds, chasing bread that only has temporary benefits. We confess our idolatry, that we have pursued you as a means to *an* end, and not *the* end. We ask that you would grant us understanding of your word through Your Holy Spirit. Show us the Bread of Life, who leaves no one hungry. Allow us by your grace to behold Jesus today. Dethrone the idols of our hearts. Replace an addicted, weak, obsession with perishable bread with a deep satisfaction with the Bread of Life. Show us the love and care of the Son, who will cast out no one the Father gives to him. We seek our satisfaction in you. We ask that what we do not know, you would teach us, what we do not have, you would give us, and what we are not, you would make us. In Jesus name, Amen.

Main Point:

Jesus is not a means to other things. He is The Bread of Life, which means we need him for everything. The work we do to receive the Bread is believe the gospel. The result of The Bread is a new heart, and new life in God.

Outline:

- I. Ok, it's been two weeks since the last message in John, so let's review where we're at so far in John chapter 6. A few weeks ago, we saw this incredible story of Jesus having compassion on a massive crowd of five thousand people who had come to see him. And if you recall, Jesus asks the disciples to find a way to feed them. And John tells us that Jesus didn't say this because he was ignorant of how impossible a task this seemed, but because he wanted to test the disciples. He was trying to show them that the way that they were used to thinking wasn't going to work for what he was doing. They had to trust that he could do anything and everything he wanted to accomplish his task. So they find what they can, which isn't much for such a huge crowd, just five barley loaves and two fish, and they give it to Jesus. Then Jesus gives thanks for the loaves and distributes them to the whole crowd and everyone eats their fill. And the people, having eaten their fill, begin to say "This is indeed the Prophet, who is to come into the world," and they start conspiring to capture Jesus in order to make him their king. Notice what happened there, before, when they had nothing, they were willing to follow Jesus out onto a mountain without food, trusting that somehow it would be worth it just to see him and hear from him. But after they eat, after they've received his gifts, they change. They no longer come to Jesus on his terms. They recognize he has power to satisfy needs and wants, and they actually think they can force the guy, who just fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, to be king. They start treating him as a means to an end. The strange part is, Jesus actually wants to be their king! He wants to rule over them with love and kindness, he wants to protect them, he wants to see them enter his kingdom. The problem is, they want him to be their king, not because they love him, but because they love what he gives. So Jesus retreats. He's not going to take second place in anyone's heart to anything.
- II. Then in the last message we saw how the disciples, seemingly left on their own, decided to cross over the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. As they were rowing the wind picked up and the sea became rough. So these experienced fishermen, who had been navigating the sea for most of their lives, found themselves in a storm they couldn't seem to get out of. And then out of nowhere Jesus came to them, walking on the water, and he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." If you recall from Pastor Marc's message, that phrase "It is I" can also be translated "I AM," that is to say, Jesus was telling them, "Don't be afraid, your God is here." So Jesus steps into the boat and immediately they're at their destination. So that's where we are picking up from as we read this passage.
- III. This week we have finally arrived at something we've been previewing for a while, we're going to be looking at the first of seven major "I Am" statements that Jesus makes throughout the gospel of John that testify to who he really is. So today, as you may have guessed, we are going to be looking at this claim that Jesus makes, that he is the bread of life. So let's dive in.

22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 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.

- IV. So the people see that Jesus has escaped them and they go on a man hunt. We don't know exactly how many people are part of this crowd, but judging by the size of the crowd that ate the bread, I think we can assume that it's pretty large. Somehow they get a hint of where he went and decide to head for Capernaum. So you have this mob of people crossing the Sea of Galilee looking for Jesus who ate the bread and want more.

V. Now I want you to notice something important here. At this time and this place in history, the average person isn't snacking. There's really nothing like a fast food restaurant. They don't have the abundance of food that we have today in America. If there's a famine, they can't count on being able to just bring in food from somewhere else. People can starve. When John wrote this, bread and fish were the staple diet of that part of the world. So all these people wandering the countryside looking for Jesus aren't just looking for him because the miracle was cool, or because the bread was particularly good. It may have been, but the reason they are looking for Jesus is because they recognize he can take care of a real physical need that they have. They're stomachs are grumbling, they're tired of putting in so much work just to have their crops get wiped out by drought. They see Jesus multiplying bread and they see security and comfort. The need is real.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 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. 27 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."

VI. So they find Jesus, and they ask him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" and by Jesus' response you can see that they're really thinking, "We've got some spare loaves here, can you say a quick prayer?" Notice they call him Rabbi, just like Nicodemus did back in chapter 3, remember? Nicodemus tells Jesus that he knows that Jesus is a teacher sent from God, and Jesus proceeds to tell him how little he really understands about who Jesus is. Remember the woman at the well? Jesus tells her everything about herself, all her failed marriages and relationships, all her shame, and she has the quick wit to respond, "Sir, I perceive that you are prophet"? That's the situation here. John seems to hone in on situations like this throughout the book. People are amazed by who Jesus is and what he does, and they want what he has, but they want to get it while remaining in control. These people want to call Jesus Rabbi, they want to make him their teacher, but they want to do it for all the wrong reasons, and they want to do it on their terms.

VII. And Jesus offers this incredibly powerful rebuke: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give. For on him God has set his seal." I want to draw out a few things from this statement by Jesus.

- A. First, he says "you're seeking me, not because you saw signs" Now of course, the people very clearly saw Jesus break the bread and multiply it, so Jesus doesn't mean that they didn't see that happen. In the original greek, Jesus uses the word meaning "signs," instead of the word "miracles" to describe what he did with the fish. John, the writer of this gospel, uses this word "sign" a lot. The other gospel writers use a word that means something like "miracle," John never uses that word. He uses the word "sign." So what's the difference between a sign and a miracle? A sign points to something. These miracles are not ends in themselves, they are pointing to something beyond them. Jesus didn't just want to feed people physical. He was showing them something about himself. He was trying to show them he's already King, so he doesn't need anyone to make him king. He can take bread, and break it, and make it do what it needs to do to sustain his people. He can walk on water if that's what it takes to show his followers that he's in control. But tragically, what these people get from this sign is a full stomach and little else. They don't care about the giver, they just want the bread. Give us the bread, do your trick, we're here, we're following you, just give us more bread.
- B. Jesus is rebuking them because he knows something they can't see. They're going to be hungry again. If he gives them bread today, they'll come back hungry, and maybe even more hungry than before. I think one thing we have to take out of the fact that Jesus left these people and didn't keep on making bread for them, to show them that he is the true bread, is that he can and will do the same with us if it will ultimately benefit us. So take note, Jesus is more than willing to take

bread from you that won't be ultimately satisfying if it means you get the point of the sign. If he has to take gifts from you in order for you to see that he is more satisfying as the giver than any of those gifts, he will. So let that be a comfort, and a warning. Jesus will not take second place to anything in your heart.

- C. Jesus was talking to people that had almost nothing compared to what we have. Do you think his rebuke might be relevant to us today? Could we be in danger of this sort of idolatry to safety and comfort? Here's a good way to know, when was the last time you couldn't find bread? Please, hear me clearly, I am not saying that it's wrong to enjoy the benefits that an industrialized society allows. It's not wrong to enjoy a steak. It's not wrong to own a car. But we have got to be aware that all of this is a gift, and not a need. At the end of the day we have to be able to say that "man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." We have to watch our hearts closely, he is worthy of being first. Please don't let something that will let you down take his place.
- D. They will never be ultimately satisfied by bread. So he tells them, and us, don't labor for bread that perishes. In other words, bread goes into your body, it gets used, and then you know what happens after that. It doesn't stick around. What's more, a body that gets the right amount of bread at the right time, with the right amount of exercise to go with it everyday is still going to die. This is why Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount,

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:31-33

VIII. So Jesus gives our needs different priorities. He says first, you need the kingdom of God and his righteousness. You need God first. You also need water, and shelter, and bread, but you need God first. And God knows that you need those things. He delights to provide those things for his children. He's a good father, and he gives good gifts.

28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

IX. So the people hear of this food that can give them eternal life, and they want it, so they ask: "What must we do, to be doing the works of God? You said there's labor to be done, we want to labor for this food that satisfies and that leads to eternal life. How do we earn it?" They seem to think Jesus is referring to the Jewish law based on how they ask the question. They might be going through a list of things they've done, like the rich young ruler, trying to see if they've accomplished enough to get this food: "I don't lie that much, I haven't slept with someone who isn't my spouse, I've never murdered anyone, I've got some luxuries for sure, but I give to the poor, I'm not too selfish with my time towards God. Maybe I qualify for this food."

- X. And Jesus answers them: "Believe in him whom God has sent." Wow. I don't know if you realize how incredible that statement is, but I want to point out a few things about it.
 - A. First, This food that they get by believing in Jesus, is a gift, it's not something that can be earned. Remember, Jesus says work for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you. So the food which is most satisfying, is given.
 - B. Second, they ask Jesus what must they do to be doing the *works* (plural) of God, and when he answers them, he answers them with a singular answer. He doesn't say "These are the *works* of

God, that you believe in him whom he has sent,” he says, “This is the *work* of God, that you believe in him who he has sent.” This is a total paradigm shift from the Pharisees that were so holy and had so many rules that they accused Jesus of sinning for healing a man on the Sabbath in chapter 5. No longer are there works (plural), that result in right standing with God. There is one work that results in receiving the food that endures to eternal life, and that’s believing in Jesus.

- C. Second, while the food that is given is a gift, Jesus seems to consider belief a sort of work. Some of you may be wondering, “How can it be a gift, and also something that we have to work for?” The answer lies in what Jesus actually says the work is. If the work is believing in Jesus, then the work actually is to eat the food that endures to eternal life, and not choose food that perishes. Do see that? If they’re trying to get the food that endures to eternal life, and Jesus is the bread of life, and they’re job is to believe in him, they win, because their work is also their reward.
- D. So they ask him what must they do to *be doing* the works of God, and his response is simply to believe in Him. And the way that the Greek sentence is written here suggests that what Jesus is talking about is a continual action. He’s not telling them to just say a prayer and go on with their life. He’s saying, the way that you can *be doing* the work of God, so that you get the food, is that you can *be believing*. He’s saying, you want this bread that satisfies, believe in me. This is a sort of work. Here’s what it looks like: You don’t forget where all your hope is just because you had a bad day, and you don’t forget where all your hope is, just because you had a good day. It means you don’t forget who is working out your salvation in you. Tom Hall, who was here recently, puts it like this: “If you don’t give up, you win.” It means that you believe, no matter what you’ve done, that when Jesus says “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out,” that he means it. It means you take Philippians 2:12-13 seriously when it says “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” So you are both constantly seeking to remind yourself of the good news of what Jesus has done for you, and you are also trusting that God is working in you through his Holy Spirit to keep you trusting him. How do you know that you’re going to wake up tomorrow and not abandon the faith and go live life however you want? Because his Spirit is working in you.
- E. This is what Jesus calls everyone who wishes to follow him to. You can’t just say a prayer and live however you want. That’s not faith, that’s idolatry. Real trust in Jesus means real dependence on him as your sustaining bread.

30 So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

- XI. Based on how the crowd reacts to this, I take it they don’t appreciate what Jesus is saying. The way they see it is that he is challenging Moses. So they demand a sign. Moses gave signs to show he had authority from God when he gave the Israelites the Law, so if Jesus wants to establish a new way of relating to God, he has to have a sign. Does anyone else see the irony here? He just gave them a sign yesterday, and the sign looks pretty similar to the sign they point out that Moses gave, namely, giving them bread, or manna. They still want to follow the old law. They don’t want this new system. This system means they can’t try to figure out a way for God to owe them something. “Look at the work I did, God, will you give me some bread? Do you think you could give me more bread than the sinner sitting next to me? I did my taxes honestly, I don’t gamble, I don’t look at porn. Can you give me some bread?” In this system, they owe God everything, because he’s given them everything. They seem to actually want the old system. So just for a quick refresher let’s look back at the terms of the deal that they seem so adamant about sticking to.
- XII. So in Deuteronomy, we see the Israelites preparing to enter the promise land, and Moses, because of his rebellion against God is not going with them, so Deuteronomy is like the farewell sermon of Moses, in which he restates the Law for the people of Israel and then reminds them of their covenant

with God. So in Deuteronomy 11:26-28, Moses tells the Israelites, “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.” and throughout Deuteronomy Moses lays out the law of God for the Israelites. Then, in chapter 28, Moses really lines out what the blessing and the curses are that await the Israelites depending on what they do. So the first 1/4 of the chapter is full of incredible blessings of protection against enemies, and prosperity with crops and children, and other amazing blessings. But the last 3/4s describe the curses that God will bring upon the Israelites if they fail to keep the law, and this is perhaps the most fierce and terrifying passage in the whole Bible, I encourage you to read it in your own time. It says that God will bring on the Israelites horrible diseases, and that their crops will fail and their enemies will overtake them. It says cursed shall you be in the city, cursed shall you be in the field, cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

XIII. Sound like a good deal? Any takers?

XIV. But that’s the end, having set the blessings and the curses of the law, Moses tells the Israelites on more thing, I want to read this to you.

26 “Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you. 27 For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord. How much more after my death! 28 Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them. 29 For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands.”

-Deuteronomy 31:26-29

XV. So Moses gives the Israelites the law, tells them of the blessings and the curses, and one of the last things he tells them is that they will not keep it. This cycle gets continued throughout the Old Testament all the way up to Jesus. The people say they will follow God, they go astray, they get cursed, God sends some one to lead them back, and then they go astray again. All the way up to Jesus.

XVI. So Jesus is standing before these Israelites, who know the story of the Old Testament, and they’re telling him they need a sign to show he has authority to give a new covenant that supersedes Moses. After he just showed them a sign! Are you catching the tone-deafness here? What Jesus says next is critical.

32 Jesus then 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. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” 34 They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

XVII. He’s saying, Moses didn’t give you that bread, my Father did, and now he’s giving you the true bread. That bread your fathers ate was just a shadow, but I’m the substance. You want to be satisfied? I’m the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

XVIII. And their response is to say “Sir, give us this bread always.”

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. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 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. 40 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.”

XIX. Now that’s not where the story ends, there’s more to it. We’ll hear the rest next week. For now, I’ll say this. You can claim to want the Bread of Life, and not really want it. You can claim to love Jesus, and really just love what he gives. John Piper puts it like this, “Jesus did not come mainly to *give* bread, he came mainly to *be* bread.” Jesus wants to be your sustainer. If there is anything you think you need more than him, you’re not receiving him as the Bread of Life right now. He wants to be as important to you as food. That’s why he chose eating bread, and drinking wine as symbols of belief in him at the last supper. So we’re going to take communion now, and celebrate what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross, but before we do, I’m going to pray.