

## Anything Less Won't Last

John 6:22-71

### Introduction

In John's gospel, chapter 6, verses 1 through 21, Jesus Christ had arrived in the city of Tiberias, and there, along the shore of Galilee's sea, He had performed a miracle. With only five barley loaves and two pickled fish, He had fed a crowd of as many as 20,000 hungry people. The people were so amazed that they desired to make Him a king at once.

But, Jesus slipped away and, the next day, docked at Capernaum with his disciples. It was not long, however, before the news spread and the masses of people, once again, flocked to Him.

Let us pick up our study at John, chapter 6, verse 25.

*And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"*

Jesus ignored the question. Look at His response in verse 26.

*Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."*

Now, food was especially important to these people because their lives centered on agriculture. Imagine a leader who could provide the essential for physical life – food.

It is hard for us to understand. To us, a good meal is not such a big deal because it is readily available! Bread is commonplace!

Today, I know that many of you will go out to eat at a buffet restaurant – you know, those feeding

trenches where food is eaten beyond the point of respectability! I like the fresh bread. When they bring that out, we are like Pavlov's dogs – we salivate! We could make a meal out of the bread. I know, our arteries would stick together with all that bread and butter, but what a way to suffer!

The point I am trying to make is how commonplace a meal is – especially bread. But this was not so in Jesus' day. Bread meant toil and sweat – it was anything but easy! The free food that Jesus could provide was a ticket to instant retirement. So, these people are following Jesus, as verse 26b says,

*. . . because you ate of the loaves and were filled.*

In order to understand the equivalent emotion, imagine Jesus Christ appearing before us and telling us that He is the Messiah. Hey, we know He lives in our town, we know where He went to school, we have seen Him with splinters in His hands, sweating over a bench or a table in his carpenter shop. But, imagine being given a dollar bill and seeing Him multiply that dollar so that each one of us were left with 10,000 dollars in our wallets. Anybody would follow Jesus . . . but for the wrong reason. And, that is the point of this passage.

Look at verse 27.

*Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.*

Jesus says, "Don't work for physical food, but work for eternal food."

Now look at verse 28.

***They said therefore to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”***

What a classic question! What works can we do to receive eternal life? Here is the answer, in verse 29!

***Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you . . .***

. . . get baptized and join a church . . ., excuse me,

. . . that you do your best and try not to commit any serious crimes . . .

No! The work of God that finds eternal life is, that you . . .

***. . . believe in Him whom He has sent.***

Now, the Jews knew that Jesus was relating this belief to Himself! So they ask, in verses 30 and 31,

***. . . What then do You do for a sign, 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 out of heaven to eat.”***

Now the background for this question is the rabbis’ own teaching. They were teaching the people, “As was the first redeemer (Moses), so is the final redeemer. As the first redeemer caused the manna to fall from heaven, even so shall the second redeemer cause the manna to fall.”

What amazes me is that the leaders did not catch the concrete connection between the feeding of the five thousand and the manna in the wilderness. Why? Because, I believe, they were looking for literal manna!

There was also another belief circulating, a superstitious, extra-biblical belief, that clouded the picture. It was the belief that a pot of manna had been stored in the first temple, in the ark, and that when the temple was destroyed, Jeremiah, the prophet, had hidden it. They believed that when the Messiah appeared, He would locate and produce that pot of manna as a sign of His authenticity.

So, in effect, they are asking Jesus to produce the manna when they say, “Give us the sign!”

Jesus’ reply is in verses 32 and 33.

***Jesus therefore said to them, “Truly, truly, . . .”***

Or, “Listen up!”

***“. . . I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”***

Jesus makes a distinction in these verses – the manna from heaven was a temporary provision (they ate and died), the bread of God is an eternal provision (you eat of this and you never die).

Continue to verse 34.

***They said therefore to Him, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”***

Does this sound familiar? In John, chapter 4, Jesus told the woman at the well, “I can give you living water,” and she said, “Lord, let me have some so I won’t have to draw water from this well anymore.”

These people said to Jesus, “You can give us bread that will last forever and that gives eternal life. We want it!”

Now look at verse 35.

***Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; He who comes to Me shall not hunger, and He who believes in Me shall never thirst.”***

Jesus says, “I’m it! I’m the bread of eternal life.”

By the way, this is the first of seven statements, recorded in the gospel of John, that begin with “ego eimi”. That is the divine name of God that is first recorded in the Old Testament, “I am, that I am.”

Jesus will say, I am –

- the bread of life (6:35),
- the light of the world (8:12, 9:5),
- the door (10:7, 9),
- the good shepherd (10:11, 14),
- the resurrection and the life (11:25),
- the way, the truth, and the life (14:6),
- the vine (15:1, 5).

Jesus Christ selects several metaphors to describe Himself and the plan of salvation that He is revealing.

Now continue to verses 36 and 37.

***But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father***

*gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

Now, this is an interesting verse that teaches two truths in one verse:

- divine election, and
- human free will.

Now, from our human and limited perspective, we cannot see how divine sovereignty and human responsibility can work together. Evidently, God does not seem to have the same problem figuring it out – with Him, there is no conflict. And, both truths are clearly taught in scripture!

A church member once asked Charles Spurgeon, the great London pastor, how he reconciled the two truths. He responded by saying, “I never try to reconcile friends . . . it’s never needed.”

The danger comes when you try to emphasize one truth over the other.

I like to think of salvation, divine election, and free will from the perspective of a doorway. Pretend that I am standing in a doorway. There is a frame around me. You represent the world looking at the door of salvation. Over the door, you would read, “Whosoever will may come.”

You say, “I will come,” and you walk through the doorway of salvation.

You look back, over the door, now that you are saved, and you discover the other truth, “[elect] before the foundation of the world.” “Oh, I’m one of God’s elect.”

Well, the last thing in the world you would do is run back out with an eraser and change the phrase, “Whosoever will may come,” to “Only the elect may come?!”

## **Bible Wonder**

No! And, therein lies the biblical wonder.

### **The message to the believer**

The message to the believer, in Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 4a, is,

*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world . . .*

You have been chosen, by His grace, before the creation of the world.

### **The message to the world**

The message to the world, in John, chapter 3, verse 16, is,

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

The message to the world, in Acts, chapter 16, verse 31, is,

*. . . Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved . . .*

God never gave us the responsibility to determine who the elect are, but He did give us the responsibility to deliver the message to the world.

I read an article, recently, that said there are more than 11,000 peoples groups that have not been reached with the gospel remaining in our world. If we put together missionary teams of ten people who would target each peoples group, we would then need 110,000 missionaries. That is a lot of people, right? Yes, but from the number of active evangelicals in this country, 110,000 missionaries is only one half of one percent.

The challenge to every believer in this is – never to rest in your election, but to work in evangelism.

Now continue to verses 40 and 41.

*For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of heaven.”*

## **Three Problems With Christ’s Message**

Now, you need to know that there were three things about all that Christ said that troubled the Jews who were in the audience that day.

### **Disappointed by Jesus’ family background**

1. First, they were disappointed by Jesus’ family background.

Look at verse 42.

*And they were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we*

*know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?"*

In other words, "This can't be. He doesn't look like the Messiah to us!"

Now imagine, for a moment, a rich relative dying and leaving you in his will. The next morning, a plain white envelope is delivered to your door. You open it and peek inside to see a cashier's check for 100,000 dollars!

You look around the door for Ed McMahon, but there is no Publisher's Clearinghouse van in the driveway. No, you didn't fill that sweepstake form out this year, did you? Even though you were one of the certified finalists, with signed affidavits, and you had decided to get the monthly check instead of the yearly check, and your new Jaguar would be dark green. Not that I have ever filled one out!

No, this is just a check for 100,000 dollars. But wait, it is in an ordinary envelope. And look, one corner is bent and the flap is slightly torn. "Hey, if you're going to give me a hundred thousand dollars, I'll only accept it if it's in a one hundred percent linen envelope with engraved lettering. No thanks, keep your money."

That is crazy, huh?! That is what they are doing with eternal life!

In other words, "What He's saying sounds Messianic, but He doesn't have the background that we think a Messiah should have. He doesn't look like what we thought a Messiah would look like. He has eternal life to offer? Na. He's just an ordinary carpenter."

They were troubled that the Messiah could be an ordinary envelope.

### **Confused by Jesus' metaphor**

2. The second thing that bothered the audience was that they were confused by Jesus' metaphor.

Look at verses 47 through 50.

*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who 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 which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.*

Skip to verse 52.

*The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"*

The Jews' problem was that they could not see past the metaphor. Eat Christ? Drink his blood? That sounds weird! Unless you understand that Jesus Christ is drawing an analogy between ingesting physical bread and ingesting spiritual bread.

Now, some have interpreted this to be a literal eating of Christ – something that takes place mysteriously at communion. This is the Roman dogma called transubstantiation – that the fruit of the vine and the bread at communion literally turn into the very body and blood of Christ.

Well, is Jesus talking about taking communion? NO! He is talking about salvation.

How do I know? Well, let me give you a Greek lesson in verb forms.

I might say to you, in English, "I just ate my lunch."

All right class, what is the verb in that sentence? No, "lunch" is not the verb! "Ate" is. If you told me that you had just eaten your lunch, I might think you had simply had an early lunch. But, in the Greek, the verb form will tell you a tremendous amount of information just by its form. I could say, in Greek, "I just ate my lunch," and the verb form means,

"I just ate my lunch, and I'm still eating it," or

"I just ate my lunch, and I'm still feeling the effects of it," or

"I just ate my lunch for the last time, for the rest of my life."

Do you get the picture? I know this lesson is a thrilling moment for you!

The aorist verb form is used in these verses.

Look at verses 50 and 51a.

*This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it . . .*

(one time for all time)

*. . . and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, . . .*

(one time)

*. . . he shall live forever . . .*

Skip to verse 53.

*Jesus therefore said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh . . .*

(one time)

*. . . of the Son of Man and drink His blood, .*

*..*

(one time)

*. . . you have no life in yourselves.*

How many times do you take communion? As often as it is offered! How many times are you saved? Once, for all time!

This principle of ingestion is consistent throughout the New Testament. Just as I ingest bread, so that I may live physically, so I have invited Christ in, I have ingested Him, so that He now lives within me.

The apostle Paul wrote, in Galatians, chapter 2, verse 20a,

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me .*

*..*

So also, I have been ingested into the body of Christ, so that Christ lives inside of me and I live inside of Christ.

Now, if you live in North Carolina, you are called a North Carolinian. Why? Because you live within the borders of the state of North Carolina.

I used to be called a Texan, because my wife and I used to live in Dallas, Texas. Originally, I was a Virginian, because I was raised and lived inside the borders of Virginia.

So you are now a Christian, because you live inside of Christ; and Christ lives inside of you!

So, this is a metaphor. Jesus draws an analogy between eating Himself and eating bread.

## **Eating With Salvation**

Let us compare eating with salvation. How are they similar?

### **Both are performed to live**

1. Both are performed to live – they are both necessary for life.

To derive any nutritional benefit from that homemade bread, we have to eat it. I can go up to that restaurant counter and look at it, squeeze it, smell

the aroma, and admire it, but I will remain hungry until I eat it.

The same is true of Christ, You may admire Him from a distance, talk about Him, carry the recipe around under your arm in genuine cowhide leather, but, until you believe in Him, until you receive Him, you remain eternally hungry.

### **Both eating food and receiving Christ are performed to answer a need**

2. Another similarity is that both eating food and receiving Christ are performed to answer a need.

It is wonderful to eat when you are hungry, yet when you are full, the same thing that made your taste buds water earlier, now hurts to even look at it!

So also, those who are full of the things of the world have no appetite for Christ, but those who finally discover the emptiness of the world, come to Christ and partake and find, in Him, satisfaction!

### **Both are performed only by personal involvement**

3. One final analogy is that both are performed only by personal involvement.

No one can eat for you, can they?

The other day, I was feeding Charity, our three month old. I would put a little cereal mush in, and she would spit it out. I would put it in, she would spit it out! Strong willed thing – just like her . . . just like her father. I discovered that, if I stuck the spoon in and rubbed the food off behind her gums, where her top teeth will eventually grow, she had a tougher time spitting it out.

Now she will have to learn to eat, if she is going to survive. I cannot eat for her. In the same way, no one can eat the bread of life for you; no one can partake of Christ for you. You must partake of Him for yourself!

### **Disturbed by Jesus' challenge**

3. Well, the audience was disappointed by Jesus' family background and they were confused by Jesus' metaphor. Finally, they were disturbed by Jesus' challenge.

Look at verse 60.

*Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"*

The Greek word for "difficult" is "skleros," which does not mean, "hard to understand," but "hard to accept".

At this point, the disciples knew quite well that Jesus is claiming to be God's bread from heaven and that no one can live eternally without submitting to Him.

To this day, many a person refuses Jesus Christ, not because Christ puzzles their intellect, but because Christ challenges their life!

### **Three Responses to Christ's Message**

In the latter portion of this chapter, we have three responses to Christ's message.

#### **Some backed away**

1. One response was that some backed away.

Look at verse 66.

*As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.*

Now please understand that the term "disciple," "mathetes," means, "pupil, learner". Of the two hundred sixty four times it is found in the New Testament, it is used of the twelve disciples, of all true believers, and of those who followed Him temporarily for selfish reasons.

#### **One would betray**

2. The second response was that one would betray.

Go back to verse 64.

*"But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.*

We will study this man at a later time.

#### **Some believed**

3. The third response was that some believed.

Look at verses 67 through 69.

*Jesus said therefore to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."*

What a statement! "Where else can we go? Who else can satisfy us, now that we've been with You and have tasted this bread of life?"

Anyone else would never be able to satisfy our deepest longings.

### **Conclusion**

When he began his unbelievable career, he was a seventeen year old refugee with one hundred dollars to his name and an unquenchable hunger for success. His family had lost a large fortune, when they were forced to flee their homeland, and now this teenager had arrived in South America to start over. By the time he was twenty five years old, he had not only earned his first million, but he had developed a reputation as a ruthless, hungry, and determined man. In his middle aged years, he was surrounded by luxury and pleasure. He made worldwide headlines by marrying the widow of the assassinated United States president, John F. Kennedy. The philosophy of Aristotle Onassis was captured in one succinct statement, "All that really counts is money. It's the people with money who are the royalty now."

And money he had. At the pinnacle of his career, in 1973, his estimated worth was more than one billion dollars. He was surrounded by a priceless art collection, immense real estate holdings, and the world's most luxurious yacht.

But then, that year, his son, the heir to his fortunes, was killed. Suddenly, his possessions and wealth had little meaning and brought him no relief or satisfaction. *Time* magazine quoted one associate,

*He aged overnight. He suddenly became an old man. In business negotiations, he was uncharacteristically absent-minded, irrational, and petulant.*

Several bad decisions, as well as a poor economy, caused him to lose approximately eight hundred million dollars in only one year. Not long after, Aristotle Onassis, himself, died – an unfulfilled, man who never did find satisfaction.

One writer, reviewing Aristotle's life, wrote these penetrating words,

*He continually followed one tenet of his own religion at all costs – to fulfill his own well-being, and yet, he only truly wanted what he could not purchase – the mercy of [God].*

Have you received the mercy of God? What are you feasting on today? If you have not eaten the bread of life, you will always be hungry.

Listen to David, as he writes, in Psalm, chapter 107, verses 1 and 9,

*. . . give thanks to the Lord, . . . for His lovingkindness . . . For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.*

If you are hungry the meal is free – the bread of life is yours for the asking! Anything else, won't satisfy . . . anything less, won't last!

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 2/13/1994 by Stephen Davey.

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