

## “The Gift We Have in Jesus”

I believe there is more for us as Christians, more than many of us consistently experience. And yet, this richer spiritual life is so different than we often imagine that we are prone to misunderstand it and miss out on it. On the one hand, the life Jesus offers is the most satisfying and the simplest thing in the world, and yet it is somehow often overlooked or dismissed. This all comes out here in **John 6**.

This week as we come to **John 6**, we come to a critical turning point in Jesus' life and ministry. It is a turning point because, at this point, many of the people who had been following Jesus quit. What is it Jesus does or says that turns so many away? He tells them they are following him not because of who *he is* to them but because of what they think he will give to them. He had given them bread. They wanted more. Look what he says in **John 6:35**. Jesus says, *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”* At the end of the chapter, many of his followers say this idea that he himself satisfies us is a hard saying. So **verse 66** says, *“After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Here's the place where a bunch of people who had started to follow Jesus, said, “No, we're not going to follow him any more.”*

This passage and its lessons are so significant we are going to spend three weeks on it. The unifying theme is that Jesus is the Bread of Life. He is the one who gives eternal life and satisfies the hungry heart.

This week's message is: 1. The Gift God gives us in Jesus  
Next week's message is: 2. The Grace to come to Jesus  
Then we'll end with: 3. The Choice to follow Jesus.

This turning point in the ministry of Jesus takes place when he is not only teaching but healing and performing miracles. There are all kinds of different responses to this and to him. One of the miracles was the feeding of the five thousand. A little boy's lunch of fish and bread had been supernaturally multiplied in the hands of Jesus until over five thousand people were fed and filled with twelve baskets of leftovers. What happened next is that Jesus told the disciples to get into the boat and cross over the Sea of Galilee to the other side while he went up on the mountainside to pray. During the crossing, a storm came up, the

waters grew rough, and the disciples in the boat made little progress. Then, in the midst of the storm, Jesus came to them on the water. Jesus is showing us throughout these miracles his power to meet our needs in life, and our need to have faith in him. **John 6** picks up the story at this point and says that the next day the crowds came searching for Jesus and followed him all the way to the other side of the lake. However, when they find him, it is obvious that they are not interested in finding out from Jesus what they really need and receiving that with grateful hearts. They have their own agenda. They want more bread. Jesus confronts them about this. 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.* He’s saying, It’s not that you saw the miracle and decided to trust in me. You saw the miracles and wanted more. More bread. In **verse 27**, He says: *“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.”*

*All of this leads us into a passage in which Jesus really has some important things to say to us about a different kind of life.*

## **I. THE GIFT WE HAVE IN JESUS IS A QUALITY OF LIFE.**

When Jesus says in **verse 33** that he is the bread who comes from heaven to give life to the world or when he says in **verse 35** that he is the bread of *life*, he is talking about a quality of life.

1. All through this passage, he is using a particular Greek word. Because the New Testament Scriptures were originally written in Greek, it is helpful to understand that there are two Greek words for life, and there is an important difference between these two words. The two Greek words are *bios* and *zoe*. This is a critical point made in the Bible, especially in John's gospel. *Bios* is the word for biological, physical life. *Zoe* is the word for the quality of life.

2. We only have one English word that we have to use in two ways. I remember I heard a man tell a story about taking his little boy on his first flight. He said his little boy loved it. He liked the fact that the stewardesses would bring him soft drinks. So at one point, he asked for a soft drink. She brought him a soft drink. He put his chair back, sort of kicked back in his seat, looked out the window at the clouds, sipped his soft drink, and turned to his father; he was seven years old, he said; "Dad, this is living." What he's doing is taking the idea of "living" in English and using it not just to mean existence but a quality

of life. The words used here tell us Jesus is talking about a quality of life!

### **A. There's a difference between existing and living.**

In **John 10**, Jesus draws on the idea of the Good Shepherd in **Psalm 23**. He says he *is* the good shepherd who gives life to its fullness.

*Now, Jesus is also telling us in this passage that ...*

### **B. There are different places that people look to find life.**

In **verse 27**, he says, *Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life.* He's saying that everyone is looking and working for this kind of life. We all want to be happy and fulfilled, and we want our life to count and have meaning and joy.

***Our culture is inundated with false ideas about where life is found and what satisfies. It seeps into our hearts.*** It is possible that you can check off some of the key current boxes for Christian commitment and yet miss what Jesus is saying you need the most. What if you are staunchly pro-life and pro-marriage, you read the Bible and attend church regularly but when it comes to where you try to actually find your life and happiness, there is little difference between you and people who do not even pretend to profess faith in Jesus? Isn't it a fact that many people who profess faith chase the same things, worry about the same things, act the same ways, and often, despite what they say, inwardly believe the same things about life and what makes it worth living as the most secular non-believers?

***This is crucial for discipleship because if Christ isn't your source of life you will follow him only so far.*** Only insofar as doing so will not interfere with your freedom to chase and obsess over what you really believe you need pretty much the same way the world does. What Jesus says is so different. He tells us that the kind of life that God want us to live and enjoy isn't found in the places we are looking for! Jesus says he is the bread of life! That means life is found in friendship and relationship with Jesus Christ! He is basic and essential to the experience of living life in a way that is satisfying and fulfilling.

## **II. AT THE HEART OF THE LIFE JESUS OFFERS US IS THERE IS A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.**

Jesus makes a very important statement in **verse 33**. He says: *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the*

*world.*” Jesus does not say every one of you has to go out there and find out what is life for you. He gives life

### **A. The Bread of Life is a person.**

Christian faith is not primarily a set of ideas. It is not at the most foundational level, a set of practices, ethics, experiences, or forces either. It is a person - a person, "he" *who comes down from heaven.*

### **B. The richer (zoe) life that is so easily missed is a deeply relational walk with Jesus.**

Unless your religion is radically personal, you don't understand or know the heart of true Christian life and faith. Is your Christianity personal? Someone might say, *“Of course it's personal it so personal I don't even like to talk about it.”* Don't confuse private with personal. What the gospel stresses is that relationship with Christ in person-to-person, heart, to heart, you and him.

Marriages often suffer because they become business relationships more than close personal relationships. The people still are working together. There are certain duties and responsibilities that they carry out. They remember the big days like anniversaries and birthdays – and often they are even physically intimate from time to time. But there is little deep sharing of every day with each other. That's where a lot of people are at with Christ. They sit down in church each Sunday, just like people who sit down to supper each day in a lukewarm marriage. They are polite; they say, "thank you." But the personal spark isn't there. There's little nourishing warmth, no daily friendship, no real affection and fondness, and in-depth communication from your heart to the heart of Christ and from Christ's heart to yours. Jesus says if that is the way of your life, then no matter what you have, you aren't really living. Why? Because your heart was made for something else - for daily deep relationship with the living God.

*Do you have a personal relationship with Christ or no? You've got to know the answer to that question. The vital issue is believing .....*

### **III. THE RELATIONSHIP THAT GIVES LIFE COMES THROUGH FAITH.**

Look at **John 6:27-29**: *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.”*<sup>28</sup> *Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”*<sup>29</sup> *Jesus*

answered them, *“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”* There are two great gifts and both come by faith.

**A. It's through faith that we are saved and given eternal life.**

In **verse 40**. Jesus says: *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.”*

**Salvation in one sense is so simple.** It isn't something you achieve. It's the gift of God. You look to the Son **verse 40** says. That means you turn to him for the help and salvation you need, and you believe in Him. You need salvation, and you need it by grace. That means you don't earn it. You do not deserve the gift of God because you have suffered enough, or done enough, or tried enough. Grace is undeserved mercy from God. **Verse 28-29:** *Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”* <sup>29</sup> *Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”* That the one thing you can do. Believe in Christ. To believe in Christ doesn't just mean to believe that certain facts are true. To believe in Christ is to trust in Him as your Savior. You have to accept the truth that Christ died for your sins on the cross. But then you have to trust in Him. That's what it means to believe in Christ. Do you know that you believe in Him?

*In one sense it is so simple. At the same time it is so serious.*

**Salvation is ultimately so serious.** I've discovered as I have grown older that at a certain point, you lose the adolescent illusion that you are immortal. How long can you keep water in your hands? You know when you take water in your hands and cup it to drink it, you have to drink it quickly. Why? How long can you keep water in your hands? Not very long at all. The older you get, the more you realize that life is kind of like that. It is seeping out through your hands. No matter how hard you cup them together to hold on to it. It's slowly getting away. Anyone who has outgrown the illusion of immortality takes these words of Jesus very seriously. Jesus here says: *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.”*

*It's through faith that we receive eternal life. And...*

**B. It is through faith that we are satisfied by the bread of life.**

**Verse 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.*

It's a life of faith. Every day we choose to feed off the bread that spoils the bread of the world or feed off the bread of God that gives real life. At the heart of all those choices is the issue of faith. If you keep coming to Christ (that, by the way, is the force of the Greek present tense used in **verse 35**) if, by faith, you keep coming to Christ and believing in him, he will keep the hunger and thirst of your heart satisfied. He is the bread of God. He is the bread of life.

How do we develop and foster a faith-strong relationship with Jesus as the bread of life that feeds our souls?

All the classic Christian disciplines can help us: prayer, reading Scripture, community, and worship, for instance, but ***We have to learn to turn – to turn to Christ with our deeper hunger.*** Do you believe in his presence with you and his love and mercy for you? Sometimes people tell me about a difficult situation they are facing in their life. Maybe it's a personal conflict with someone that they think is mistreating them. Perhaps it's a financial or physical trial or test of some kind. I sometimes ask people to do something that I have also tried to learn to do. Picture Christ going into that situation with you and standing right next to you, literally putting his arm around you as you walk into the room, or open the checkbook and look at your balance. It doesn't matter what the situation. Here's the question: Would the real presence of Christ with His arm around you telling you it's going to be all right, responding to whatever your need might be, make a difference? *Would you face that trial with peace if you faced it with Christ literally standing by your side, reassuring you of his presence, pardon, promises, and his power?* The reality is the Bible tells you that if you have received Christ as your Savior, you have His real presence with you all the time. He is by your side, and He is in your very heart. If you believe that it will give you strength because He will give you strength. That's what it means to feed on Jesus as the bread of life. It means to draw strength from your relationship with him by faith.

***This is a very active, proactive, intentional, deliberate, and powerful thing we have to learn to do and continue to practice.*** One of my all-time favorite songs of worship is the hymn *Great is Thy Faithfulness*. This week I was reading in Lamentations and came to the passage that inspired that hymn. **Lamentations 3:21-24**. Listen, it says, *But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup> The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

<sup>24</sup> *"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore, I will hope in him."* Notice what is at the heart of the passage! Look at all these wonderful life-giving truths about God: his love is steadfast, his mercies never cease, they are new every morning, His faithfulness never fails. This is who Jesus is and why he is bread for your soul and heart.

Now notice how the passage begins and ends! **Verse 21** *But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.* You have to call these things to mind! You have to draw on these truths and find comfort in them. Look at how the passage ends in **verse 24**. *"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore, I will hope in him."* Is that what we say? Is that the inner dialogue of your soul, what you call to mind and speak to yourself? The Lord is my portion, I will hope in him. It matters! The image of the bread of life brings to mind the idea that you have to ingest and digest and take in and absorb deeply who Jesus is for you.

In **Ephesians 5**, Paul talks about being filled with the Spirit and singing and making melody in your heart *to the Lord*. It's relational, it's personal, it is a living faith in Jesus, and it is so needed.

## Conclusion

It will make you a better person in every way. It will better prepare you for hard times to come than anything else you can do. Making Christ, in reality, the bread of life today will better enable you to deal with prosperity and poverty, sickness and health, the past, the present, and the future.

**Amen.**

## Prayer of Response

Father in heaven, Thank you for the gift you give us in Jesus. Your steadfast love and unceasing mercy has been manifest in him our Lord and Savior. We thank and praise you from the heart, for the bread of life. He was broken for us in his death but raised for our salvation. The grace that draws us to him and is lavished on us in him is beyond our comprehension and yet within reach for all who will look on him and

believe. Deepen our faith, feed our hearts and souls, enable us to walk in the fullness of life that only Jesus can give. Amen.