

Jesus The Bread Of Life – Part 2

John 6:41-59

Pastor John Miller

In John 6, Jesus goes into the teaching of, “I am the bread of life.” Now, let me give you a little background before we jump right into verse 41. The background actually is that Jesus has fed the multitudes. With a few loaves and a few fish, He’s fed over five thousand men (not counting women and children), then got His disciples into a boat, and sent them across the lake. We studied it last Sunday morning from the gospel of Matthew. Then Jesus came to them, and the whole episode of rescuing them in the storm. When they came from the other side of the lake, they were on the west side of Capernaum. The people who were fed followed Him. Now, they were following Him for the wrong reasons, and that sets the whole background for this discourse of, “I am the bread of life.” They were following Him for physical bread—He could feed them, they wanted Him.

A lot of people want Jesus, but they don’t want a crucified Jesus. A lot of people want Jesus but don’t want to face their sin, repent, and believe in Jesus as the Son of God. They want a social Jesus. They want a Jesus that will feed them, give them a good job, prosper them, or make them healthy and wealthy, but they don’t want the real Jesus of the Bible.

Jesus knew that their motives were wrong, so He began His discourse. It started way back in about verse 22. It technically starts in verse 26 where Jesus starts the teaching on, “I am the bread of God that has come down from heaven.” When they heard that they said, “Well, give us this bread. Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and we want more bread.” They still weren’t getting the idea that this is spiritual bread and that Jesus was referring to Himself. Jesus is going to speak to them about the importance of eating His flesh, drinking His blood, and coming to Him as understanding that He is the bread of life.

Let’s read the text beginning in verse 41. “The Jews then murmured,” now the context, again, is that Jesus is teaching things that are hard for them to digest, hard for them to accept. We cover what is called many of the “hard sayings” of Jesus tonight, but they were murmuring. They were complaining at Him because He said, “I am the bread which comes down from heaven.” He said it in verses 35, 48, and He’ll say it again tonight in verse 51, “I am the bread of God which comes down from heaven. If a man eats of me, He will never hunger.” They didn’t like that. They wanted material bread, so they were murmuring at Him because He said He was the bread which came down from heaven.

Notice Jesus acknowledges His origin—that He came down from heaven. “And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? 43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.” When it says, “the Jews,” it’s a reference to the Jewish leaders, not all the Jewish people but particularly the Jewish authorities and the Jewish religious leaders. It’s interesting, again, that they had such a difficult time, as they do still today, to accept His divine nature, to accept that He is the Messiah, to accept that He is the Savior of the world. Notice

that their conclusion is that, "This is Jesus, the son of Joseph, whom we know." The truth is, Jesus was not the son of Joseph, only an adopted son. The Bible is very clear, and we covered it a lot during the Christmas season that Jesus was born of a virgin, right? So, He didn't have any physical relationship to Joseph. He inherited His nature from His mother, but she was a virgin. Jesus wasn't the son of Joseph, they thought He was, but they just kind of accused Him of being just the carpenter from Nazareth. Jesus actually said that a prophet is not without honor in his own country, so to them He was just the son of Joseph, whom they know.

"Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Jesus is going to make this statement, or a variation of this statement, about three different times. This is an amazing statement, and it's a biblically consistent statement, that those who come to God come because God first drew them—God first convicted them and drew them by the Holy Spirit—and He makes that statement very clear that, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. 47 Verily, verily," or truly, truly, "I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," an amazing statement about salvation—just believing on Jesus brings everlasting life.

Here it is, verse 48, "I am that bread of life. 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead," that bread does not bring eternal life. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." You can see why these Jews couldn't understand what Jesus was talking about—we have a challenge understanding what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is making it clear that He is the bread of God come down from heaven; and if you eat of Him, you will never hunger.

Now, how is it (verse 44) that, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." The answer is in verse 45, "It is written in the prophets." The way that God draws us to Himself is by His Spirit, through His Word. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. The prophet He is referring to is Isaiah 54:13. The statement there is, written by the prophets, "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD," so God teaches us, speaks to us, convicts us, and comes to us through the Word of God.

I heard J. Vernon McGee say many years ago (I've never forgotten it, and you've heard me quote it) that the Word of God is like a track and the Holy Spirit is like a train. The Holy Spirit runs on that track, the Word of God. He doesn't work in a void, that the Spirit of God uses the Word of God. He uses the Word of God to convict us, to bring conversion, and also to bring spiritual growth and understanding about who God is. It's so important and necessary that we publish the Word, preach the Word, get out the Word, proclaim the Word because it's the Spirit

of God using the Word of God to convict an individual. If you're a Christian tonight, it's a mystery, we won't really fully comprehend or understand it, but our response should be just to thank and praise God. You are a Christian because God drew you by His Spirit to Himself. You say, "Well, didn't I have to believe?" "Yeah. You had to believe," and you might think of that as man's part, but it's all of God's grace. Salvation is all of God's grace. We can't take any credit for it. We don't deserve it. We're saved by grace. He sought us, bought us, and redeemed us all by His grace; so to Him be all the praise, the glory, and the honor.

Tonight, when we break the bread and drink the cup, our hearts should be overwhelmed with thanksgiving, joy, and humbled that God would reach down in His love and draw us to Himself. We were running from Him, but He was running after us! He was pursuing us, and that's an area of time in my life where I will never forget when the Spirit of God began to come to me and just make me conscious of my sin, my need for God, my sorrow over my sin, and gave me that repentance and that turning back to Him. He came into my heart and forgave my sins. Just that whole initial work of the Spirit in your life is just such a wonderful, wonderful experience to think that He drew me to Himself and used His Word to speak to our hearts, and "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

Notice He says (verse 47), "Verily, verily," or this is truly, truly, a very important statement, "I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." This is one of the greatest short summaries/verses in all the Bible on salvation. You don't have to have a lot of information, you just know that if you believe by faith on Jesus Christ, you will have eternal life. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is an abbreviated version found in the same gospel. So, how do we get saved? By believing in Jesus and we have everlasting life. Everlasting life is a present possession. It's not something we hope to have, we might have, if we're really good we'll have, but He gives to us (present possession) of eternal life. How glorious that is! So, our response is to believe.

This is one of many statements throughout the whole Bible that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It is by believing. It's not by working. It's not by trying to be good or by penance or reformation or baptism or catechism or trying to be a good person or joining a church. It's by believing in Jesus Christ. Then, He makes that marvelous statement, "I am that bread of life."

There are three things I want you to see. They're not all in chronological order, so I want you to write these down. First, Jesus voices first this great claim, "I am that bread of life." I've mentioned it already, but every time Jesus used the phrase, "I am," ego eimi in the Greek, it actually is a claim going back to the Old Testament to be Jehovah or Yahweh or God. Remember when Moses was at the burning bush and God spoke from the bush to Moses? He told him to go to Egypt and command Pharaoh to release the people of Israel. Moses asked, "Who shall I tell them I'm sent by?" What was God's response? Tell them "I Am" has sent you, right? That's that Jehovah, that Yahweh, that Becoming One. Jesus is actually laying claim to being the Great I Am. What a glorious truth that is! Here He's claiming to be the divine God

and says, "I am that bread of life."

John's gospel has seven "I Am" statements. Let me give them to you. The first is, "I am the bread of life," here in chapter 6. The second one is in chapter 8, "I am the light of the world," we'll get there in chapter 8. The third one is in chapter 10, "I am the door." Also in chapter 10 is, "I am the Good Shepherd." Then, in chapter 11, "I am the resurrection and the life," in the context of raising Lazarus from the dead. In chapter 14, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me." We all know that great "I Am" statement. Then, chapter 15, is the seventh "I Am" statement. Jesus said, "I am the true vine," or I am the vine, the true one. There are seven. The number seven is the number of completion—7 days in the week. This is a complete picture of who Jesus is, every time using the claim, ego eimi, I Am.

Remember when they came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane and said they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth? Do you know what He said? He just said, "I Am." Do you know what happened to them when He said that? They all fell backwards to the ground. Amazing. I would've said, "Okay, enjoy your evening in the garden. See you later." These are the seven "I Am" statements, and we're going to get them as we go through John's gospel.

By these images—that Jesus is the bread, the light, the door, the Shepherd, the resurrection, the life, the way, the truth, the life, the true vine—Jesus is showing that He is all that men and women need and is the sole way to come to God the Father. Another interesting thought, it's the third great Old Testament image which has been used of Christ in the book of John. In chapter 1, He was Jacob's ladder. In chapter 3, He was the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness. In chapter 6, He's the bread of life. Drawing from the Old Testament, Jesus uses these images as to who He is: He's Jacob's ladder, He's the way to the Father, He reveals the Father, He's the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up—He had to die on the cross to atone for our sins—and now He's the bread of life, the manna that came down from heaven.

The fact that Jesus is the bread of life means that He can satisfy the deepest needs and hungers of the human heart. We know as believers the only thing that will really satisfy the soul (the soul is restless until it finds its rest in God) is a relationship with Jesus—eating of Jesus, feasting on Jesus. You're never going to be satisfied, you're never going to be whole, you're never going to have peace until you come and eat of that bread of God which comes down from heaven. Now, He doesn't take care of all our wants but does satisfy/meet all of our needs, and He meets man's greatest need. Bread is considered a basic substance of life. If you want someone just to stay alive, you give them bread and water. Our greatest need is for the bread of life; it is salvation, eternal life. The essence of this concept of Jesus being the bread of God who comes down from heaven means that He is eternal life. He's the salvation for our soul. It means that He came to love us, to save us, to redeem us, and to give us hope.

How do we eat of Jesus? Well, verse 51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." I believe that Jesus is talking about the cross. He's talking about the crucifixion, and the purpose He came into the world and took on humanity

was that He might go to the cross and die for our sins. So, the way we eat of Him is by coming to the cross and by believing on Him, by receiving His Word, by trusting in Him, and putting our faith in Him. A Christ without the cross is of no use to us. We can't be saved if Christ did not die on the cross for our sins. He would give His flesh (verse 51) in reference to the cross or the crucifixion. The Father sent the Son, but the Son voluntarily came and died on the cross.

I want you to notice the second thing, that Jesus makes a requirement as well in verse 51, "...eat of this bread...I will give is my flesh," that's the crucifixion, He'll die on the cross; but what we are required to do is to eat of this bread, eat of His flesh. He goes on from verses 52-59. I want you to follow me as we read it and we'll go back over it, where Jesus describes the importance of eating His flesh. "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus is speaking about the cross and eating of Him by faith, trusting in Him, and being saved. They're still thinking of physical bread, and when Jesus talks about eating His flesh, they're thinking of physically eating His flesh. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except," here's an exception,"ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," so if you don't believe and trust in Jesus, you're not born again, you don't have the life of God in you.

Verse 54, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is meat indeed," my King James translation has "meat," but it's referring to food, "and my blood is drink indeed. 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. 59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum." Jesus is actually teaching this discourse on the bread of life in the synagogue there in Capernaum.

Jesus tells us we must come to Him, believe in Him, and receive His Word. How do we eat of Jesus? Let me tell you how you don't eat of Him. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is not talking about communion. It's kind of an amazing text we have tonight. In light of communion, there are some that would actually teach that when you take communion that the bread literally becomes the body of Jesus and the wine or juice becomes the actual blood—transubstantiation is what it's called. This is not taught in the Bible nor is Jesus teaching this in this passage. He goes on (and we'll get it in two weeks from tonight) to say that His words are spirit and they are life. He's using an imagery, a picture here. He's not actually talking about cannibalism. It's interesting because communion, or what is known as the Lord's supper, has not been instituted yet. That won't happen until later on in the gospel when He's in the upper room before the night He's crucified, and Jesus obviously is there. They're not eating Him. He's not talking about His physical body, so He's not talking about communion.

You do not get eternal life by taking communion. Communion will not save you. It's a rite, it's a ritual. Water baptism will not save you. It's a rite, it's a ritual. For the Jew, circumcision could not save them. It was a rite or a ritual. Even the bread tonight, when you hold the bread, that's a piece of bread, but it's a symbol, a type, a picture of the body of Jesus which was broken for

us; and when you eat the bread tonight, it's a picture of believing in Jesus, trusting in Jesus, putting your faith in Jesus, and being one with Jesus. In the Jewish mind, when you ate with somebody, you became one with them; so the Jews would never eat with a Gentile because they didn't want to be one with the Gentile. When you eat this bread, it speaks of your unity and your fellowship with Christ, and we're going to get a picture of that in this passage where He talks about "eating My flesh," that you're one with Me, you have union with Me. It's basically teaching that we need to put our faith and trust in Him.

I want you to notice these three things. In verse 35, this is how we eat, by coming. (Write down, "by coming.") Look at verse 35. We didn't cover this verse, but back all the way up to verse 35. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me," there it is, "shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He doesn't mention eating Him, He mentions coming to Him. He uses these different terms to describe the same thing. It's coming by faith. It's believing on Jesus Christ. The way we eat of Christ...and tonight if you're here, you can eat of Him by coming to Him, and you will come to Him because the Holy Spirit is drawing you. You're being drawn by the Father.

The second way we eat of Him is by believing. That's in verse 35 as well. Jesus said, "...he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He uses both of those terms in that one verse—you come to Me and then you believe in Me. Both of those are synonyms for faith and trust in Jesus Christ. In verses 40 and 47, He also speaks about believing in Him.

Then, in verse 63 (jump with me there in your Bibles), He makes mention of the fact that we should receive His Word. He says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Notice the little statement, "the words that I speak unto you." I would say this is a third way we eat of Christ, by receiving His Word. We come to Him, we believe on Him, we receive His Word. If you want to feed on Jesus Christ, if your soul is hungry, then you open the Bible and read His Word. You feed on Christ by reading His Word.

This whole concept of Jesus being the bread and we're eating of Him by faith is an interesting thought. I want to think about the concept of eating. It's necessary for life. When someone doesn't eat, what do we think? You're sick, you're gonna die. We're uncertain as to really how long a person can go without eating. I wouldn't know. I've never tried. I'm still trying to get over all the food I ate at Christmastime—Lord, have mercy. You basically eat to sustain life, it's necessary; so it's necessary for us to have life that we come to him, that we believe on Him, that we hear His Word, that we feed on His Word, that we are in communion with Him. That, by the way, is what a Christian is. A Christian isn't just, you know, go to church and believe in God. It's coming to Christ in an intimate, personal union and fellowship with Him.

Eating also is a response to a need that is felt—you feel hungry and you eat, at least you should only eat when you're hungry. A lot of times we eat for other reasons—for entertainment or to pacify us because we just get bored. I have a confession to make. My two-year-old

grandson stayed with us over Christmas, and he left those little cheese fish crackers. Those things are insane! Those aren't for two-year-olds! There's this big ol huge bag, and it's like... I'm up in my office thinking, Cheese fish crackers. Today, I went down and got a bowl and spoon. I ate 'em like cereal. I'm thinking, What is happening to me? Then, I turned to my passage. I'm reading about eating of His flesh and drinking His blood, and it's just that, you know, when you come to Jesus, you come because you're hungry. You know, if you're a child of God, you can't go long without just feeding on Him, getting alone with and feeding on Him, coming to Him, and drawing near to Him.

Also, eating involves appropriation. I found that interesting. It involves appropriation. You know, you can't benefit from food if you don't eat it. Did you ever think about that? Sometimes people will cook things and it's more artistic than it is food, you know, it's just like a work of art. I don't want to mess it up, so I don't want to touch the plate, you know. Just looking at food will not meet your need. It won't satisfy you. You don't go into a restaurant and open the menu to just look at the menu pictures and say, "Okay, that's all. Thank you very much," and walk out of the restaurant. You have to actually eat the food. Just talking about food isn't going to satisfy you, so just thinking about Jesus and talking about Jesus, you need to draw near to Him and eat of Jesus in a way that's personal and appropriating.

Eating must be personal as well. You must eat, no one can eat for you. Did you ever think about that? If Jesus is the bread of God who comes down from heaven, your mom, your dad, your brothers, your sisters, your pastor, your friends, they can't eat for you, you must eat. You must hunger, you must thirst, you must come to Jesus, and you must eat of Him. No one else can do that for you.

Thirdly tonight, in this whole passage, Jesus offers a wonderful, wonderful promise in these verses that we have covered. He said a lot of things that are difficult and hard to understand about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and the Jews don't really get it. They don't understand. Next time we're together in this series, we're going to pick it up at verse 60, where many of His disciples (not Peter, James, and John, or the twelve), the larger group of followers of Christ, heard this saying, and it was a hard saying, who can hear it, turned and walked away, no longer followed Him.

Jesus offers some wonderful promises to those who feed on Him, to those who come to Him, to those who believe on and eat of Him. Let me point them out. In verse 51, and again in verse 54, we shall have eternal life. We shall live forever. Notice it in verse 51. Jesus actually says there, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever," and in verse 54, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day," notice, "hath eternal life." You have eternal life by eating of Him.

In verse 54, I just read at the end of that verse, "I will raise him up." You have life that is spiritual, then you also have resurrection hope, "I will raise him up at the last day." You have the hope of the resurrection. You have union in verse 56, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my

blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” That’s amazing. Jesus will amplify on this when He talks about, “I am the vine, you are the branches,” and the idea of abiding in Him. It’s the same kind of concept: we eat of Him, we abide in Him. What we have is life, we have resurrection, and we have union by fellowshiping with Him, trusting Him, and eating of Him. I love this concept of the union that we have with Jesus Christ.

I love the illustration of a sponge and water. You take a sponge and basically it’s very light, airy, no weight. You stick it in a bucket of water, what does it do? SLURP! It sucks in all the water. It becomes very heavy. You have the sponge in the water, and the water is in the sponge. I remember one day I was washing the car with a little bucket of water and a sponge. I put the sponge in, and it sucked all the water from the bucket into the sponge! I thought, That’s a trip! Then, I squeezed the sponge, SHHHHK! all the water went back into the bucket. I thought, Wow! That’s awesome! It took me forever to get the car washed. I was just tripping out on the sponge and playing games. One of the grandkids came out, and I threw it at ‘em (the wet sponge). I love that concept of we’re like a sponge—you put the sponge in the water, we’re in Christ, and we’re in Christ positionally righteous, justified; and then Christ is in us practically to sanctify us. We are in Him, complete in Christ; Christ is in us to make us more like Him, to sanctify us and give us His power to live a life that is holy and pleasing to Him.

Tonight we’re going to break bread, we’re going to drink the cup, and we’re going to do symbolically, in rite and ritual, what we just read about in our text—eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Amen?