



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: JOHN (GOSPEL OF TRUTH)

LESSON: DINING ON THE BREAD OF LIFE

JOHN 6:22-59

MARCH 21, 2021

MAIN POINT

Only the Bread of Life satisfies. All else is a pointless pursuit.

JOHN CONTEXT

Every lesson's purpose: "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John 20:31

John 6:22-59 follows up on one of the popular miracles of Jesus ministry where he fed the 5,000. In our story today, Jesus calls himself the "Bread of Life." The listeners just witnessed Jesus feeding them until they had had their fill (Jn. 6:12). But Jesus reminds them that physical food perishes; they should be pursuing that which lasts (Jn. 6:27).

INTRODUCTION

How long would you be willing to wait to ride a roller coaster? Imagine walking up to the “Avatar” ride at Disney World and the posted wait time was 180 minutes but you actually waited 295 minutes for a ride lasting around 3 minutes. When asked why people wait for long periods of time, the response is usually around the thrill of the ride, the unexpected movements, the speed and unexpected. But it’s over so fast, the serious coaster riders cannot get enough and want to ride every roller coaster.

People will go to great lengths to pursue things they think matter.

- People would begin to line up for as much as a day before just to see Elvis pass by.
- Students at Duke University camp out in line for 2-3 days before tickets go on sale for the opportunity to get seats to see their basketball team compete.

Give an example of something you pursued.

How would you identify things that you pursue?

How would someone be able to identify that you are pursuing Christ?

John 6:24 reads, “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.

The feast on the hillside was over. Jesus and the disciples had left for Capernaum and the people didn’t realize he left. Could it be that while physically satisfied their curiosity ebbed? And when breakfast rolled around, they were looking for more bread? Consider this: the idea that they ate till they had their fill literally meant “glutted.” They were full. They got up and Jesus was gone—the man they wanted to be king. They mobilize and pursue Jesus on the other side and this is where we will pick up. Think about their pursuit!

EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...

READ SCRIPTURE JOHN 6:25-34

In this passage, two words are used by both Jesus and the crowd: *signs* and *work(s)*. In what ways is there a potential conflict in the way these words are used? How might there be a misunderstanding by the crowd?

Signs – In 6:2, the people were following him because of signs, now they are following for the possibility for more food (v. 26).

Work – The crowd asked the question, “What must we *do*, to be doing the *works* of God?” (6:28). You may remember that the rich young ruler who approached Jesus also asked this very question: what must I “do” to have eternal life? (Mt. 19:16).

The people used the term “works” plural whereas Jesus points them to ‘the work’ of God. The difference is big. The Old Testament had numerous laws to keep in order to be right with God. But now, there is only one “work” required: to believe in Jesus. So, the answer Jesus gives to their question is that they must believe. Jesus says that the “work” that God requires is not following the Old Testament law, rather the “work” is that they believe.

What perspective does Jesus confront them with and why in verse 27?

Jesus confronts them on pursuing things that perish. They knew physical hunger. Some knew spiritual hunger but Jesus was telling them one was more important than the other. In addition, food that perishes takes many forms; bread, water, religious practices, wealth, prestige. Those will leave you wanting! Meanwhile, Jesus was offering them “food” that never perishes. And the food he offers doesn’t come in many forms—it comes only in Jesus himself.

Note verses 30-31. It’s fascinating that the crowd made an effort to get near Jesus only to be skeptics. Even though He had just performed a mighty miracle with the loaves and fishes, they still ask for him to provide another sign. Perhaps they missed the meaning of the manna from heaven because Jesus lets them know that the manna was not from Moses but rather God the Father.

Is it possible that sometimes we miss what God is doing in our family, marriage, work, community and church? In what ways might this happen?

There is a danger of giving credit for something to where it doesn’t belong, Jesus reminds them that bread from God gives life to the world (v. 33) and He is that bread.

READ SCRIPTURE JOHN 6:35-40

In this passage, Jesus tells the crowd that “All the Father gives me will come to me.” This means that it is only by God’s grace and help that we can come to believe in Jesus. At the same time, there are several phrases in these verses that indicate action is needed by those who hear. Can you locate some of these phrases? What action words does Jesus use that requires something of the hearer (and us)? (“Whoever comes to me” and “whoever believes in me” and “everyone who looks.”)

I think this is important. Faith is action. It may require a move from where we currently are to somewhere/something else, whether that is a physical move or a mental move.

- Whoever comes is a descriptor of someone who has arrived after a journey of sorts. We ultimately are responsible for how we approach Jesus. The crowd’s first approach was perhaps with less than pure motives. They simply wanted food. But in reality, Jesus says if you come, the perishable food you’re seeking will leave you wanting, but the “Bread of Heaven” is not just enough for today but for all time.
- Whoever believes in Me. Is this a journey as well? You make a change in heart and mind and say, yes, “I believe.” While not a physical move, it is an action. Jesus tells us to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and *mind* (Mt. 22:37). This belief was a challenge for them to set aside what they had always been taught to be true, that adherence to the Jewish laws and customs would save you.
- Whoever looks. In Numbers 21:8, the Israelites were bitten by snakes and were going to die. Look what verse 8 says: The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and *put it up* on a pole; anyone who is bitten can *look* at it and live.” In the same way, John 12:32, Jesus says, “And I, when I am *lifted up* from the earth, will draw all people to myself,” Jesus was placed on a cross and those who *look* at Jesus will be saved. Similarly, John 6:40 says, “everyone who *looks* on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life. . .”

What does faith require from you today? What kind of physical shifts or changes do you need to make to exercise faith?

READ SCRIPTURE JOHN 6:41-58

What does “This is the bread that *came down from heaven* mean?”

Jesus did not arrive in a typical fashion. He left heaven's throne and was born of a virgin. He was sinless, God in flesh who arrived from heaven after leaving his throne. This truth surprised the crowd. They thought of Jesus more so being the son of Mary and Joseph than Jesus being the Son of God.

What is the difference between bread from heaven (6:50) and bread the fathers ate (6:49)?

The manna that the people referred to came everyday and just enough was gathered for that day. If they tried to gather more, overnight it would rot and become wormy (Ex. 16). What Jesus was proposing was different. The bread was not just enough for today, but for all days. There surely was a caloric value from the manna, but there is life value for those that receive the Bread of Life. Consider this, the manna was a gift, they did not work for it or earn it, yet their fathers ate it and still died. Jesus too is a gift, yet whoever "eats" of him will never die.

In verse 34, they cried out, "Lord give us this bread always." Yet here in verse 41 they are grumbling about Him. Why?

Perhaps what Jesus was suggesting was so hard for them that they didn't see the value or the offer. They could wrap their head around a physical bread that satisfied, but to walk away from the "system" they had known since they were kids was hard. Isn't it interesting that when Moses let the people out of Egypt and provided manna for them, the people eventually tired of the food and grumbled (Num. 11:4-6)? Here several thousand years later, God once again provides food but of a nature that would be completely different from what their ancestors ate. The food Jesus provides has eternal sustenance. Yet, in response to Jesus, they too grumbled.

APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.

So pursuing Jesus. What does that look like in your life?

The average person spends about 3 hours and 15 minutes of phone screen time. Add computer and/or TV time and it's quite a bit of our day looking at a device. If we were to lay our devices bare, what would our screen time reflect about our pursuit of Jesus?

What would be some ways that people would know that your source of sustenance is Jesus?

Verse 59 tells us that this dialogue took place in the synagogue. People were “seeking Jesus.” They found him and the place they found Him was where you might expect Him to be found: the building and place where God’s people gathered. *What role does the physical location of church play in seeking God? Why is it important?*

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God to give you the courage to seek Him, the patience to overcome distractions and the will to be both hearers and doers of the Word.

COMMENTARY / RESOURCES

This passage of Scripture occurs right after the Feeding of the 5,000 which is one of the few miracles recorded in all 4 Gospels. This makes this setting important. They had witnessed the supernatural, been fed to the full, and yet in the end they grumbled at what Jesus was saying.

v. 24. When they woke up, they discovered Jesus was gone. They took the most direct route across the sea to find him. How they knew where he went is not for certain and how those boats came to be available to take them there is also not certain. However, it points to the divine providence of God, allowing those that seek Him direct access to Him.

v. 25. They posed the question to Jesus as to “how He got there.” Jesus never really answers. It appears they were genuine in their question, yet Jesus really doesn’t answer them. He does, however, remind them to pursue things that matter most.

vs. 52-53. This event is before the Lord’s supper is instituted, so this is not a literal eating of the flesh or drinking of the blood but rather a spiritual. The sense is that Jesus is able to do for a person what food can only do partially and temporarily. Food *sustains* life for a brief time, it does not *give* life. Jesus, on the other hand, not only sustains, but he also gives life eternal. In this sense, when comparing Jesus to food, Jesus is greater or truer than food.

Spiritual hunger is an evidence of spiritual re-birth. Hunger and thirst are a result of a body in need, in the same way, if we are to know Jesus, we should hunger and thirst for life giving words from God.

