



## Sermon

### ***The Bread who came down from Heaven***

**John 6:26-51**

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Two weeks ago we heard in the gospel reading about Jesus feeding 5000 people from five loaves and two fish. I talked about God's provision for our needs - how we had seen an amazing provision of funds to be able to build this building which reminded me of the oil flow in the miracle of the widow's cruz when Elisha made provision for the widow and her children facing debtor's slavery.

The Apostle John continues his account by telling us what happened in the following day. Jesus and his disciples get back to Capernaum and the people asked Jesus how he crossed the lake. This kicked off a lengthy discussion which fills the rest of chapter six. Let me summarise where they have got to:

He told them that they were only interested because he gave them free food. Better than perishable food they should look for eternal food.

Where can we get food that endures to eternal life?

The Son of Man would give it to you. God the Father has given him his seal of approval.

We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?

The only work God wants from you is to believe in the one he has sent.

Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. Moses gave our ancestors bread from heaven to eat.

It wasn't Moses but My Father who gave them bread. Now he offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

Give us that bread every day.

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

This discussion is working at different levels. The people start off talking about physical food that satisfies immediate hunger but Jesus leads them to the idea of food for the spirit. Yes God provided manna for the people and Moses told them what to do. But now God is providing a different, a greater, a spiritual bread which feeds people with eternal life.

We learn some important things from this passage:

## Jesus came down from heaven

Five times in the larger discourse, Jesus said he came down from heaven!

- <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."
- <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven ...
- <sup>50</sup> "... here is the bread that comes down from heaven ..."
- <sup>51</sup> "I am the living bread that came down from heaven."
- <sup>58</sup> "This is the bread that came down from heaven."

Jesus made it clear that he is a divine being incarnated in a human body. He came down from heaven. Some people say that Jesus never claimed to be God. I would say he repeatedly claimed to be God. He came down from heaven. We did not come down from heaven – Christian theology understands our spirits are created at conception. But it was different with Jesus – he existed before the foundation of the universe. He is the eternal one who took human form in Mary's womb and became man.

He is not just a wise teacher or a special guru (they called teachers 'Rabbis' in Israel). No this is someone completely different.

In verses 41-42, the people challenge his claim saying, "We know your mother and father. How can you say you came down from heaven?" Jesus tells them to stop grumbling or muttering. He doesn't answer but moves on to explain that people can only come to him if the Father draws them to Jesus. If you listen to Father God, you will come to Jesus. Jesus makes a further claim saying only he has seen the Father. Now the Old Testament revelation was very clear that no one could see God and live – his glory would destroy a human. But Jesus says he has seen God – who must he be?

## I am the Bread of Life

Jesus makes another claim. He is the Bread of Life.

This is one of those "I AM" statements. In Greek, you can say "I am" with a single word, *eimi*. But this is more emphatic and deliberate. He has used the personal pronoun, *ego*, to emphasise the "I". *EGO EIMI: I AM*. This is intended to make them think of the name of God revealed to Moses, "I am who I am", *Yahweh*. It is a claim to be God – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses – the Almighty.

If you didn't notice it, he repeats it again and again:

**John 6:48, 51** I AM the bread of life. ... I AM the living bread that came down from heaven.

## The nature of this bread

Jesus tells us he is our food. Verse 35 continues: "He who comes to me will never be hungry. He who believes in me will never be thirsty."

This bread, this stable food is provided by God. Jesus is the food God provides. But he makes it clear this is not food to satisfy temporary hunger. It is not even like the miraculous bread in the desert which was temporary food miraculously provided.

**John 6:49-51** Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

What does eating this bread do for us? It gives eternal life. If you eat of this bread from heaven – which is Jesus - you will not die but you will live for ever. He says he is living bread. The very name *Yahweh* signifies the one who simply IS. I AM life – if I am bread, I am living bread! If you eat this bread you will live. If you partake of Jesus you will live – forever – *into the ages* as it is put in Greek.

In verse 35, Jesus told them that this bread, he satisfies hunger and thirst forever. You will "not not hunger" and "not not be thirsty ever." We know from experience he means spiritual hunger and thirst.

Three times Jesus refers to raising those who believe in him up on the last day.

Verse 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

Verse 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Verse 44 "No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

The promise is to be included in the Great Resurrection when those in Christ are raised to life again. They will be given new bodies and inherit the Kingdom of God.

## How then do we get this bread?

We are told in Jesus' words.

Verse 29: The work of God is to believe in the one he has sent. **Believe in the Jesus.**

Verse 34. The people ask for this bread. Jesus answers that he is the Bread of Life, then, "He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." He who comes to me; he who believes in me. **Come to Jesus; Believe in Jesus.**

Verse 40: "... Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." **Look to the Son and believe in Him.**

There is another clue here. In verse 51, Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Now the Greek verb tense of anyone "eats" is the aorist. When used like this it means a one-off event. It is not saying, "Anyone keeps eating." But anyone who has eaten will live forever. It would be obvious to an original reader, but we need it pointed out to us. He is not talking about a repeated action. It is a one-off event.

The coming to Jesus, the believing on Jesus is an event – it is the beginning of relationship. That doesn't mean we come to Jesus and then have nothing more to do with him. But this particular metaphor of eating of the living bread is a singular event not a repeating one.

Later Jesus will expand the idea of bread further with the communion bread representing his body. and he hints at that here saying by "This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

How can he give eternal life? – it comes through the sacrifice he would make of his own life to free us from our bondages, our rebellious nature, our separation from God.

## Our Response

But for now, from the reading we have, what is our response?

Have we come to Jesus? It is not enough to know about him. It is not sufficient to come to church and listen to sermons. We need to come to him. He tells us that it is Father God who draws us to Jesus. If you are struggling to come to Jesus, ask God to draw you to him. Ask him to teach you so that you can learn of him and come to Jesus.

Then he says you need to believe in Him. It means more than just believing Jesus exists. Or even accepting it as true that he is God the Son. Or even regarding it as a fact that he died for the sins of the world and was raised from death. It clearly means more than that. Believing in Jesus is more than just accepting that facts about him are true. Believing in Jesus is trusting in him personally. And that trust will be seen in action. It involves personal commitment to him.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a French acrobat and tight-rope walker called Blondin. He was famous for crossing Niagara Falls on a tight-rope, 1100 ft. long, 160 ft. above the water. This he accomplished, first in

1859, a number of times, each time with different variations: blindfold, in a sack, trundling a wheelbarrow, on stilts, sitting down midway while he made and ate an omelette.

The story is told that after he'd gone across and back again with a wheelbarrow he turned to the crowd and asked if they thought he could do it again with a person in it. The crowd shouted in unison 'Yes – we believe you can do it!' 'Okay' he said, 'who wants to be first?' - at which point a sudden hush swept over the crowd.

It's one thing to believe in your head that he could do it; it's quite another to entrust yourself into his care – but that is true faith – it goes beyond mere intellectual agreement. His manager was prepared to exercise such trust. On August 19<sup>th</sup> he allowed Blondin to give him a piggy-back across the rope. Faith is seen in action.

So have you come to Jesus? Have you trusted him with your life? Have you received the promise of eternal life – starting now?

Here is a prayer you could pray which expresses that choice to believe in Jesus.

"Lord Jesus Christ, I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life (take a few moments to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience). Please forgive me. I now turn from everything that I know is wrong. Thank you that you died on the cross for me, so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. Thank you Lord Jesus, Amen."