



Sunday, November 15, 2020

Sermon #24 from the Gospel of John

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“Bread for the Starving”

John 6:41-59 (King James Version)

Good morning, church, it is so good to see you! To give you an update—I’m getting stronger every day; my lungs are catching up to that. My experience with COVID-19 mainly affected my lungs. God is doing an amazing work; I’m so thankful. I saw a doctor this week, and he said I was “ahead of the curve” as far as getting better. I want to say a word of thanks to the church staff. One of the greatest blessings to a pastor when he gets sidelined is that the church continues on. Thank you to Pastors Clyde, Jeffrey, and Tom. Thank you to those who took care of the Harvest Festival on October 31. The ministry of the church has moved forward, and I praise God for that! It is so good we can worship together today. For those streaming with us today, you’re another congregation and we’re praying for you and glad to have you worship that way with us.

We’re continuing our walk through the Gospel of John. This is an eyewitness account of Jesus’ life written by the old disciple who perhaps lived into his nineties. After he walked with Jesus during His three years of ministry, about fifty years passed. By God’s leading, John knew he had to write this biography of Jesus Christ. John said he couldn’t write down everything he saw or heard; if he did, the world couldn’t contain the books. But he gave us the “high water” marks of Jesus’ life that we might understand Him as Lord, Savior, God and King. It’s interesting to me that John never names himself; he never says I’m John who wrote the gospel. He identifies himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved”—five times in this book—Jesus loves me. Friends, the good news is after more than two thousand years we can say the same thing—we’re the disciples and believers whom Jesus loves. We’re the disciples He empowers to have ministry in this world. Yes, He empowered John to write this gospel but He empowers and impassions us to go into the world and lead people to Jesus as Lord and Savior. Our gospel and message are much the same as the old disciple John.

We began Chapter 6 a few weeks ago; it’s very involved. It begins with the feeding of the five thousand plus women and children with two fishes and five loaves of bread on the side of the Sea of Galilee. The crowd is so enthused after this that they want to raise Him up as an earthly king on a throne. Jesus didn’t desire or want this kind of “fame.” He wants to be lifted up as Lord, Savior, God, and King on the throne of our hearts. He retreats from the crowd to a mountain by Himself; the disciples go in a different direction—to a boat at the Sea of Galilee. They were going to sail eight miles across to Capernaum but that night a terrible storm arose which scared them greatly. Jesus comes to them walking on the water and says “...**Be not afraid; I am with you.**” When I was scared in my own “boat,” Jesus came to me; ministered to me; healed me; gave me what I needed the moment I needed it. He is the same Savior today; He comes to us in our moment of need just as He did with His disciples.

The next day Jesus and the disciples are in Capernaum; the crowd followed Him there. Scripture teaches us that people seek for Jesus; it’s still true today. The world is seeking the Savior; the world still needs Him just as they did then. Jesus is feeding the crowd now with “eternal” food—salvation, grace, blessing, forgiveness. He makes two important statements to them, which are still pertinent today: (1) John 6:35 “Then Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.**” Knowing Jesus Christ is the truest peace and satisfaction in all of life; it’s the only satisfaction that’s eternal and will never go away. (2) John 6:40 “⁴⁰**And this is the will of him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.**” No one will be turned away when they seek Him as Savior. It doesn’t matter your color, nationality, wealth, how much sin lies behind

you—He will raise you up on the last day so you will have eternal life. Today, if you don't know Jesus as your Savior and come to Him, He will not turn you away. What good news! He's teaching these eternal truths to the multitudes He fed the day before. Our Scripture picks up today where another group is listening to Him; they're not in the crowd of five thousand. They stand off to the side murmuring and whispering against Him. They criticize and hate Him; they're planning His death. This group consists of Jewish leaders—scribes, Pharisees, and priests who are totally opposed to Jesus' ministry. Let's begin reading John 6:41-51:

⁴¹The Jews then murmured at him because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. ⁴²And 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? ⁴³Jesus 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.** 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 I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.** ⁴⁸**I am that bread of life.** ⁴⁹**Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.** ⁵⁰**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.”** That last part is reference to the cross—Jesus will give Himself bodily to it so the world through Him might have the opportunity for life. As we look at these verses, Jesus is giving words of life to a spiritually hungry crowd of over five thousand. They're absorbing the truth, and many are coming to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. But over in the corner the Jewish leaders murmur to themselves. They didn't believe His word and did not want Him on earth—how did He come up with saying He's the bread of life that came down from heaven? He's just the son of Joseph, a carpenter, from Nazareth. He grew up in a middle class family; there's nothing really important for Him to claim Himself as bread from heaven. Jesus stands there to say I am that bread; I did come from heaven. Read verse 41. In Greek, murmuring means simply using a low voice and speaking to your neighbor in a whisper. This group is murmuring amongst themselves against Jesus right there. In verse 43, Jesus knows exactly what they're doing and saying even though He physically did not hear them. He knew their hearts and words of hatred. I'm reminded of one of my favorite Bible verses Psalm 139:4 that says “For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.” True for these men speaking against Jesus; true for us. So Jesus tells these religious teachers to quit whispering among yourselves about me because I know exactly what you think and where your heart is. I know how lost you are. Read John 6:44. Jesus says you leaders of the Jewish faith are standing here, tearing me down, hating and criticizing me—even planning my death! If you would just be quiet and listen to the word of God I'm teaching, if you would listen about me being the bread of life coming for you, the Father would draw and woo you to me. Your hearts, ears, and eyes could be opened that indeed you're speaking to the Savior Himself—if you would just be quiet long enough to hear. It's interesting Jesus is reaching out to the very people who want to plan His death—in love, grace, and forgiveness. He's willing to offer eternal life even to His enemies. That's His heart and love of God—almost impossible to comprehend. That's the way He loves the world; He'd receive anyone who will come to Him.

Read verse 47. Jesus is offering forgiveness even to those who hated Him. Verse 48 is short but is a huge statement to these Biblical scholars; they know what every page says. They know everything from their study of Old Testament scripture. Jesus says “**I am that bread of life.**” When these men hear these words “**I am**” their minds immediately go back to Exodus 3:14 where Moses meets God at the burning bush. God calls him to be a leader and Moses said if you send me out, they'll want to know your name. What is your name? God says to Moses my name is “**I AM THAT I AM**”—in English terms it's Jhwh “Yahweh.” In many places in the Bible,

God's name is shortened to simply "I Am." So when these Jewish teachers hear Him say "I am that bread of life" they first of all hear God's name. When He says I am, He's identifying Himself as the Almighty God—they're looking at Him face to face. They think of the manna that saved the Israelites back in the wilderness in Exodus. If they would just be quiet, listen, and think that Father God could draw them into salvation.

Now look at verses 51-59. 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."** ⁵²The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? ⁵³Then Jesus said unto them, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in you.** 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, 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.** ⁵⁹These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum." Here, Jesus is comparing the manna that fell in the wilderness many centuries before when the Israelites were wandering. They had been released from slavery in Egypt and going to the promise land and become faithless; God allows them to wander in the desert a long, long time. In Exodus 16 we see God's people and read the word "murmur" again. They say Moses dragged us out here in the desert, and we'll die of hunger. So they murmur against him, God's chosen leader. Yet every day God sends down a bread from heaven—manna which in Hebrew means "what is this stuff?" They collected it every day and lived on it forty years. God was faithful to provide it so no one would go hungry. Jesus said the manna back in the Exodus kept the Israelites alive for forty years but it only kept them alive temporarily. It was still physical food, and the Israelites still died from physical ailments and disease. Eating my flesh is the bread of heaven that gives us eternal life; the bread of earth can't give you eternal life. Jesus compares Himself to manna, but when these Jewish leaders hear it they think it's cannibalism. Read verses 53-54. They think they have to literally eat His flesh and drink His blood. Jesus is saying if you simply live your life eating physical bread, the day will come when you die. The day you die you will be separated from the love of God for the rest of eternity. If you will partake of me and live in me, the bread of life, I will give you eternity. I will raise you up at the last day; we'll be together in heaven for eternity. He's not talking about the Lord's Supper here; that had not yet been established. He's talking about coming to Jesus Christ and partaking of Him as our bread of salvation and eternity.

Let's take this Scripture and apply it to us. As I mentioned in the early service any Bible study we do in a Sunday School class, a group, or sermon if you don't take time to apply it to where we are then it's not a complete Bible study. It has to make a difference in our life. Every single person on earth does indeed have to live by physical bread. We'll think about our bills this week, our income, what we need to do on earth—I think most people live in this realm. How big can my house or my car be? How much fame can I claim? These people are lost in a sea of stuff. They've given no thought to heaven, hell, or eternity. Because they live on physical bread they've never contemplated the other things. All people need to be introduced to the bread of life. We don't have a club here; we have a ministry team here. Our club doesn't meet in a huddle, hear the sermon, and wait until the next week. We hear a word from God that the world is starving for Jesus Christ; we have the bread to take to the world. We have a tremendous mission and calling to go into the world today and this week to take the Savior there so the starving can have the bread of life. The church is so important; I believe every believer should be a part of the living body of Jesus Christ. I think as He established the church it really wasn't an option—am I to be a church member or not. If we're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, we're brothers and sisters—a family. We're the bride of Christ, and we belong together and need each other. We need to support one another as we take the bread of life to the world.

Church is so important, and I'm so glad that during this strange time that we're a church in different areas and places. Church is a foreshadowing of what heaven is going to be. We're together now, and we'll be together for all eternity! My prayer is that you'll find joy in being here and being together. We have a tremendous mission standing before us: We're to take Jesus into the world this week. You and I will cross paths with many people who are starving to death and don't have the bread of life. They're living on an earthly level and have everything money can buy but they don't have a Savior. They don't know the good news of the one who went to the cross and rose from the grave and came to us as the bread of life. They need to know and will come to know through us, walking as representatives of Jesus Christ. Take this ministry seriously! My prayer is that you and I will be responsive to represent Him. We have the bread the world needs. I also pray we will rededicate our lives to sharing the bread with those who are starving. That's what Jesus was doing with this religious group, and we, too, are called to take Him into the world. I pray we will go with a new commitment for the bread of life.

If you're here today and have never accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, there's a hunger in you. You might have everything money can buy, but something's missing. I know this because the Bible tells me this. There's a hunger that's not been satisfied. You need Jesus Christ, the bread of life. He's willing to satisfy your need and hunger this very moment. The altar is open for you. Say yes to Him and take that living bread which can satisfy you only the way Jesus can by filling that spot of eternal life in your heart. He's waiting on your decision; waiting on our decision to serve Him.

Let Us Pray: Our Father, our God, thank you for these moments before you. Thank you for giving me the privilege of standing in this pulpit once again. Thank you for my brothers, Clyde, Jeffrey, and Tom who took over and filled the spot so well. Thank you for letting me rejoin the team of Clifford Baptist Church. Gwen and I have been through so much isolation and quarantine; the day she brought me home from the hospital she had to quarantine and is just now free. Both of us are free people today, and we're so thankful! Thank you for the greatest freedom of all—knowing Jesus as the living bread of life. Thank you for knowing Him as Savior, for the promise of life everlasting, of the mission you've given to the church to take the bread to the starving. Help us to remember that this week. If there's one today who's hungry and has never received you, Jesus is waiting to come into that heart by a simple "Lord, I want to believe in you; I want to put my sin at the foot of your cross where you paid the price. I want to put my faith at the mouth of the empty tomb that you rose from the dead that I might never die again." For that one who needs you, Lord, I pray the Father will draw him or her in today. Bless us in these moments, Lord, and thank you for everyone who's heard the truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.