



Sunday, November 8, 2020

Sermon #23 from the Gospel of John

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“The True Bread of Life”

John 6:25-40 (King James Version)

Good morning, Clifford Baptist Church! It’s good to be back in this pulpit—a place I’ve been looking forward to coming back to after these weeks. It’s been a long couple of weeks—being in the hospital and at home recuperating. I feel good and am so glad to be here and see you. I’ve missed you, and I know you’ve been with me these days with thousands of prayers and contacts through email, texts, and cards. It’s amazing to me the number of people who have “come out of the woodwork” to support me, Gwen, and my family. I’m so thankful for the way God has blessed us; He has taught me lessons of faithfulness, trust, healing, and I know He is taking care of all things. I’m gaining strength but still have a ways to go. My oxygen levels are getting more normal; I don’t have to depend on the supplemental oxygen as much. As I was reviewing this message, I thought of Paul where in II Corinthians 12 he asked God to heal him from a thorn in his flesh. God said no; I’m going to use you in weakness—verse 9: **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”** So today I come to you a little bit weaker as a human being, a bit weaker from going through COVID and yet God’s strength is upon us, upon me! You’re not going to hear a weak preacher today; you’re going to hear the strong message of Jesus Christ. It’s not about how strong I am but how strong He is!

We continue in the sermon series in John. You remember God used this elder of the disciples to give an eyewitness account of the life of Jesus Christ. John admits there’s no way in the world he could write down everything that Jesus did; he said if I wrote down everything he did in his earthly ministry, the “world could not contain the books.” There’s a reason John wrote this gospel—memorize these verses from John 20:30-31. ³⁰“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹But these are written, that he might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing ye might have life through his name.” We see this as a witnessing tool for the world. John’s heart is that every person would read this gospel, see the life of Christ, and come to Him as Lord and Savior. God doesn’t want to lose one of us. This book, pure and simple, shows us His life and the life we can have in Him and through Him as our Savior and Lord and God. We’ve studied Jesus feeding the five thousand and at the end of that miracle the crowd wanted to lift Him up and proclaim Him as an earthly king. Jesus didn’t want that kind of fame; He retreated from them to a mountain alone. He just wanted to be the Lord of their lives. The disciples didn’t go with Him; they went to a ship to sail across the Sea of Galilee and dock in Capernaum. To recap, the disciples get about halfway across the Sea at night and a terrible storm arose. They are scared to death, and Jesus comes to them in the midst of their crisis—He walks on the water to them. I’ve found this to be true myself during these last weeks—Jesus came to me. When Jesus got to the boat, two miracles instantly happened—first, the storm ceased and the sea became smooth as glass. Jesus had the reins of control over nature; He Himself has the authority over the universe so He made the storm cease. The second miracle was that the boat docked immediately at Capernaum. Jesus has rule over time and distance. The crowd of five thousand plus people saw Jesus leave but did not know He left the mountain and met His disciples in the Sea. We’ll pick up in the Scripture where Jesus and the disciples are in Capernaum; the crowd was still searching for Him. Turn now to John 6:24-40.

²⁴“When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus.” Ladies and gentlemen: I want you to know that no matter what our world is searching for—happiness, fame, money, possessions—we’re searching for the peace and life of Jesus. We have a ministry and a gospel to proclaim because the world is looking for Him, and we can introduce the world to Him.

We continue with this conversation between Jesus and this huge crowd that followed Him to Capernaum. ²⁵And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? ²⁶Jesus answered them and said, **Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not believe ye saw the miracle but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27Labor not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.** ²⁸Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? ²⁹Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.** ³⁰They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work? ³¹Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. ³²Then 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. 36But I said unto you that ye also have seen me and believe not. 37All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38For I came down from heaven, not to do ministry own will, but the will of him that send me. 39And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day. 40And 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.**” What a beautiful reading of God’s word—an assurance that He does not want one person lost but He wants us all to believe and trust in faith in Jesus Christ.

Go back to verses 25-26; I think God has a sense of humor here! The crowd said the last time we saw you was on the mountain; how did you get here so fast?! Verse 26 was not a complimentary statement to the crowd—you didn’t follow me because of God’s power or the miracles you saw; you followed me because you were looking for another free meal, another handout! Your intention and purpose is not right! Read verse 27—strive after things eternal; don’t go after things that will rot, perish, and pass away. Seek the eternal life I want to give you—the food of everlasting life. I can and want to give you that. Jesus said God has sealed me with the authority and power to forgive you forever and promise you heaven. He’s telling this crowd I’m the one who can save you; don’t think about food. Think about life! Don’t think of me as a miracle worker; think of me as your Savior. The miracles are simply indicators of my power, authority, and God sealing me to be Savior. Then the crowd asks Him in verse 28 how do we earn these blessings, God’s forgiveness, and eternal life. The answer is in verse 29 “...**believe on him whom he hath sent.**” Believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He calls us to believe Him in forgiveness, in blessings, and everlasting life. All the Bible revolves around one word—**believe**. Put your belief in, trust in, faith in, your value in Jesus Christ as your Savior and your Lord. There’s no other work or act that can bring us forgiveness and eternal life. We can’t witness enough to do it, not moral enough to earn it, not put enough money in the offering plate to buy it, to sit in church enough, and never be good enough in our actions to earn it but Jesus wants to give us life everlasting because we believe Him, invest our faith and trust in Him. He calls us to confess Him above everything else in the world as our Lord and Master. Certainly we believe He died on the cross and shed His blood that we might be forgiven. We believe He rose from the dead to assure us as the first-born of the dead that we, too, will be raised to eternal life.

The total package of true salvation is bundled up in one single word we see here in John 6: **Believe**. Believe Him, trust Him, submit to Him. To qualify this—it’s not a call to “lip service” belief to flippantly say “I believe Jesus, or I believe in God.” Satan believes in God. People say sure I believe there’s a man upstairs. Scads of people say I believe in Santa Claus, in fairy tales, in this or that...But Jesus is asking us to believe and surrender with all our heart, might, and soul that He is our Lord and Savior. Belief is deep. It’s saying Lord, you’re the centerpiece of my life. You’re the one who sits on the throne of my heart; I believe you and everything about you. True belief, saving belief means total unyielding, unwielding surrender to Jesus as our Lord—that we totally submit and surrender to Him in the truest belief and trust of all: total submission. If you can say I believe Jesus, but I’m going

to do my own thing and ignore this word and one of these days at my funeral you can play the song “I Did It My Way.” Friends, this is not belief, this is not trust, not surrender, not the belief Jesus is talking about in this Scripture. We can’t ignore the word; we can’t make our own path. You’ve grossly missed the mark of Jesus Christ in your life if you say yes, I believe but I’ll do my own thing. He’s our Lord, our Master. We bow our knee to Him, surrender to Him, and follow Him in everything He calls us to do. If you can’t get off the couch and do something in service and worship to the King, you have insulted the Christ of the cross. We can’t take belief flippantly; rather, we give our all to Him, surrender to Him our life and our future of our home, our family in the way we’ll love, serve, and worship Him.

Read verse 30. The crowd wants to know what He’ll show them to prove He’s the “real deal.” Lord, Moses gave Israel manna from heaven in the exodus—why don’t you rain down some bread here? Why don’t you bring something out of the clouds? Read verse 32. Jesus corners the crowd to say Moses didn’t give you the bread but God gave you the miracle of the bread. Today, Jesus said, God is giving you bread, giving you life, strength from heaven—it’s raining down on you right now. He’s giving you life from heaven because He sent the bread to you. What Jesus is saying is I am that bread standing with you now; I am the one who can nourish you and keep you to eternal life. Here is Jesus’ definitive statement about Himself—read verse 35. Jesus Christ is the eternal nourishment of life that every single person on earth needs; He is the true bread. He alone is the single and only decision in life that gives us a place in heaven and eternity when we believe Him, give Him more than “lip service” and bow our life, heart, and will to Him.

Great food passes away; money can be lost in a heartbeat. Houses can burn; cars dent and rust away. Fame will fade. I found out personally these past weeks that in two hours perfect health can turn to the brink of death. Everything we have is dependent on the grace and blessing of God. What happened to me changed my strength and my attitude. It changed my outlook because I built up my life walking two miles every day trying to keep strong and active, and it disappeared just like that. I realized all my life depends on the grace, blessing, healing, and strength of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. I have nothing in myself to give; it is all dependent on how He blesses me, heals me, strengthens me, and reinvigorates me now for ministry once again. Believe me, while the body is a bit weak right now, the fire is burning inside more than it has for years for the gospel message of belief in Jesus Christ. Only what He gives lasts and satisfies. It’s true for every person on earth. Every person is seeking for Jesus; they may not know it or understand their search but down deep in their heart they’re searching for Jesus. Pastors Clyde and Jeffery spoke so well the last two Sundays about needing Christ in the challenges of our day. I appreciated their messages and was fed by them. When the world goes through a challenge and the church faces a struggle like we’ve been facing since March and when we get anxious, tense, and worried we take our eyes off Jesus. When we look away from Him and our belief begins to falter and fade, that’s when things will turn south and get hard. That’s when we realize we’re walking away from Him. When life hits the wall of discontent, grief, or struggle, we cannot take our eyes off Jesus but that’s when we need to believe the deepest, follow Him the closest, and hold on to Him the tightest.

Today, can we stand up together as the church of Jesus Christ and say “Lord Jesus, lead on!” As you lead, we will follow in belief, trust, and look at the ways to follow you in ministry, outreach, and the gospel to the nations because all people are seeking for you. We cannot wait to follow Jesus until a virus passes, until our government gets perfect, or until the world straightens out and all is good. That’s never going to happen! Today is the day to take our stand. So we surrender, we believe, follow, and bow our knee to Him. We all love our children and grandchildren—we’d take a bullet for them. If I had the means to pay off my children’s houses, cars, college for their children, I would but I can’t provide these things. Yet Jesus promises us He provides our every need, He takes care of our every challenge, He walks with us in our need for healing. He says if you will believe with your heart

and surrender to me I will meet every single need of your life. Isn't that amazing? He says if you come to me as Savior in true surrender I'll never turn my back on you. I'll never leave you when you get in a tight spot. When you're in the middle of the sea in a tempest, I'll come to you. I'll take care of you, heal you, strengthen you; I'll bless you and be with you. That's the Jesus we serve, the One we worship today, the Jesus we take out of this church and into the world as the gospel message. He said I'll never cast you out if you know me; I'll never put you to the side if you come to me as Savior. This is His character; a promise that will never be broken. In verse 39 He says God the Father will not lose one of His children. The entire message of the Bible revolves around this passage. Read verse 40. The entire will of Jesus for His creation is that we all come to Him as Lord and Savior. When we do, we'll have everlasting, joyful, secure eternal life.

The challenges of this old world of sin and imperfection will open up to true life. We're to keep believing, trusting, and bowing our knee to Him. When God finishes history on this earth, when the last person is saved, Jesus said all believers are going to be raised up to a heavenly reunion of life and live in eternity with the blessing, healing, and loving banner of God. I want you to remember that Jesus told this crowd to look beyond money or food; look beyond your circumstances. Look beyond the virus, the government, the world and see Me, believe Me, trust Me as the true symbol of life. All believers are going to be raised up one day. I'm so grateful He's the center of life. Have you made Him the center? No lip service. Is He the center of your heart—the first thought every morning and the last prayer at night? See Him as the Bread of Life. It's about surrender, friends—not just saying I believe but I surrender. He's my Savior and my Lord.

Will we stand today and say “Lord, I sell out; I surrender; I bow my knee to You; I believe you as my Lord and Savior.” It will change us and invigorate us to take the gospel to the world. If you need Him as your Savior, it's more than just admitting praying to a “God up there.” Rather, receive Him as Savior; tell Him you want Him to take up residence in your heart and life. You went to the cross to forgive me of my sin; rose from the grave to give me eternal life. Lord, come to me, save me, make me your son or daughter. If you open your heart to Him now, He promises “I'll never leave or forsake you; you will always be mine.” Make that decision today. God bless us as we continue to be ministers of the gospel in a world that needs to see Jesus.

Let Us Pray: Our Father, our God, thank you for these precious moments that I get to be in your pulpit—more so today, more than thirty-eight years. What a privilege it is to be in this place, this day to deliver Your word. Father I pray that you'll bless and invigorate your church that we'll not be scared by a virus, the government, the world situation. Help us to stand up and stand out for Jesus—the one on whom we believe and in whom we'll minister. I pray for the one who needs you as Savior will come to you this day. Bless us. We love you in the strong name of Jesus Christ. Amen.