

Bread For The Hungry

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[0 : 00] Well, let's look back to John chapter 6 and take verses 32 to 34 as a focus for this evening. ! And looking through this chapter, Jesus points out in verse 4, he tells us that the Passover was at hand.

And the Passover in Jewish experience and history was the greatest deliverance that they had ever seen. This was just prior to them being led out of Egypt in the Exodus and towards the Promised Land.

And the Jewish people remembered and revered that great deliverer Moses who led the people. He took command of millions of their ancestors and led them out of Egypt.

And the Jewish people were really looking for some kind of repetition of all of this because God had promised long ago that he would send another deliverer for another deliverance.

[1 : 37] And we're told that in Deuteronomy chapter 18 where it says, the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me. Another deliverer like Moses was to come.

And so this is what the people were looking for. And we might ask the question, well, what were at least two of the most striking features that's recorded for us about Moses?

Well, first of all, he walked the people millions of them through the Red Sea as they came out of Egypt. And secondly, he fed the people with manna, with bread from heaven.

And this is where the Jews believe. This is where Jesus is trying to correct the Jewish people here as well. And the mark of the Redeemer, of course, was that he would also bring down manna from heaven.

Now, we read here that Jesus had just fed 5,000 men together with women and children. So he has, as it were, brought down manna from heaven at that point of feeding the 5,000.

[2 : 51] And in verse 14 there, the people said, well, this is indeed the prophet who used to come into the world. So there was a kind of consensus amongst the people.

And yet, there was this little word, but. And this little word, but, seems to come in so often at so many different times. And it was no different here.

Despite the consensus that this was indeed a prophet who was in front of them here, that being Jesus, they still weren't convinced. He served the people with manna.

And they were thinking, well, perhaps he's even crossed the sea. But they need more proof. They need more proof so that they would believe that he is God's chosen one.

And in verse 30, you see the question being asked, Well, what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?

[3 : 56] And that's what was being thrust towards Jesus. Now, that may strike us as being absolutely ridiculous, considering what we've just read in this first section of John 16.

Because he's just fed 5,000 men, plus their wives, the women, and all the children who were there, approximately 20,000 people. And so, when we look at this, we think, well, how absurd is this?

And how unreasonable are these people, when they're putting that to Jesus? What work do you perform? And so, they're also throwing in, because of the doubt in their mind, what we have there in verse 42.

Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Is this not Jesus the carpenter? And he is the son of Joseph and Mary.

So how can he be the son of God when he was born to Mary? And so, they have all of these doubts in their mind. And they remember, Moses gave the people this marvelous honey-like bread from heaven.

[5 : 19] And what Jesus has done here is given them just barley loaves and fish, which is more or less part of their staple diet. So, they'll also remember, as they think of this miracle that Jesus has

done, being perhaps not such a big deal, Jesus has fed, say, 20,000 people once.

But when they remember Moses, then Moses fed the people six days a week for 40 years. Jesus has only done it once for them.

Moses fed about 2 million people every day. And Jesus has fed 20,000 people. So you see, from their perspective, from their thinking at that time, then they think that he may be like Moses, but they need more evidence.

Because these doubts are in their mind. They're unconvinced at this point. But it's also very clear, from what Jesus says as well, that their interest is materialistic.

They don't seem to be interested in salvation. They're interested in political freedom. And they're interested in free meals. And the Jewish people had, and some still have, this vision of the Messiah that would come, that he would be a political warrior, that would overcome Rome, conquer Rome, conquer all the authorities, and give them their freedom.

[7 : 04] And they weren't seeing this in any way or shape or form. And Jesus said to them, as we read there in verse 26, you're seeking me because you eat your fill of the loaves.

That was what mattered to them in the here and now. And you know, so that's just like people today as well.

It's so clear that there are so many people just living life for the present. And they're wanting their fill of materialism, and they're wanting their fill of this life.

They have no real concern for salvation. And they pay lip service, perhaps to the gospel, perhaps pay lip service to Jesus.

But yet, so, so many people still in the same situation, still unconvinced, still unsure about what is the right way forward.

[8 : 12] Because it's so hard to see past the present for so many. And that's heartbreaking. And yet, for many of us in here who are believers, then we can relate to it 100%.

Because that's exactly the way we were beforehand as well. And it needs the Lord just to open up our hearts and our minds and our understanding. And that's the prayer.

That's the prayer that everyone needs to pray to the Lord to open up their minds, their hearts and understand to God's word. By His grace, that He would gift you your grace.

That's what's required. The grace of God. Because that then enables you to have faith in His word. And so, we see the people then needing more proof here.

And it's against this misunderstanding that they have of Jesus at this point that Jesus makes this awesome claim in our text when He says, I am the bread of life.

[9 : 21] Now, I'm sure that most of you will know that this is the first of the seven great and significant I am saints that we have here in the Gospel of John.

And these I am saints present us with a very clear picture of who Jesus is. There's Jesus saying, I am the bread of life, I am the way, the truth, and the life, I am the resurrection and the life, I am the door of the sheep, and so on.

There's seven of them, I am the true vine, and so on. And they're very significant. And this takes us back to Exodus chapter 3 and takes us back to the time where when Moses was looking after and tending sheep, then God came and God called him into his presence, the burning bush.

And God asked him at that point or told him that he wanted him, Moses, to lead the people out of Egypt and towards the promised land of Canaan and that he was the man that God had chosen.

And Moses, of course, had great doubts and we'll read in that chapter what these doubts were and he had a fear and he said, well, if I go to the people, what are they going to say to me? They're not going to believe me. Who will I tell them I sent me?

[10 : 37] And the answer God gave him was, God said, you tell them that I am has sent you. That is my name. I am has sent you. And this is how we look at these I am saints in John's gospel and the significance of them in leading us to believe who exactly Jesus is.

And what we understand from this phrase I am is that Jesus is saying, I am the eternal Lord and I am the bread of life.

I am the eternal Lord who is near and I am the promised Messiah. And that's what we understand from that. And as Jesus tells us these things and as we look at our passage here, then let's look at it under three headings very briefly.

First of all, we can see here there's a hunger. In whatever way there's a hunger. But there are also blessings from Jesus, secondly, and thirdly, there is this great invitation.

So I'd just like to look at them very briefly. So first of all then, there is a hunger. And this is a hunger which only Jesus can meet and only Jesus can satisfy.

[12:02] And you know, it's pretty hard for us living in our modern world today to understand just how essential bread was in these days.

We have all sorts of food at our fingertips here and it's so available to us and we have food that comes from all over the globe and we have it there instantly.

But in those days it was mostly bread that they ate and that was supplemented by fish or very occasionally it would be supplemented by meat.

bread. And yet even today bread is synonymous with food. Bread is food. Remember Jesus instructed us to pray give us this day our daily bread.

Because we ought to be dependent upon the Lord even for the food that we eat. Bread is so basic it means food is one of the things without which life is impossible.

[13:08] We cannot live without bread. we cannot live without food. And what Jesus is saying here is that I am the bread of life but there's a hunger here that goes much much deeper than any physical hunger.

There's a hunger in every one of us that no ordinary food can satisfy. And Jesus says in verse 27 here he says do not work or do not labor for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life which the son of man will give you for on him God the father has set the seal.

And God the father has set a seal upon Jesus through his baptism where the spirit came down upon Jesus and the key thing was that that spirit the Holy Spirit remained upon Jesus it wasn't just temporary.

And that hunger of the soul the hunger of the real you that hunger it can't be satisfied by anything in this world and it doesn't matter what you have it's not going to satisfy you because you're going to keep wanting more.

These things nothing in this world will satisfy whether it's a new house or whether it's a new car or whether it's riches whether it's money whether it's a foreign holiday it doesn't matter once it's over then you're looking to the next one.

[14:50] You're never satisfied with what you've had. You're always looking ahead and wanting more and more and more. And that's the way this world deals with us. And that's the way that we are in our minds just looking and wanting more all the time.

And isn't it amazing that even today when we've probably got more today than people have ever had in this world before. And we have so much of it at our fingertips.

We have instant access to so many things. things. But if you look around you, and I don't mean physically in here tonight, but you look around you even in your communities and in your workplace, in your circle of friends, in your families for people who don't have the Lord, look around you, people aren't happy.

They're not satisfied. They're just not happy. Are people at peace? Are they at peace with themselves? No, they're not. The only real peace that can be found is the peace of God.

The peace that comes from God. We know that people are not at peace. And the reason for that is that every single one of us has guilt upon us because every single one of us has broken God's law.

[16:17] And you might turn around and say, well, I haven't murdered anyone. I haven't done anything that's really really, really bad. But if we break even one little part of the law, we've broken the whole law.

And the Bible is crystal clear on that. Some of us are aware of that and some others aren't. But whether we realize it or not, and whether we admit it or not, this hunger of the soul, it is built into the DNA of each one of us.

You and I have immortal souls and there's something in us that was created to live forever. That was God's plan before the fall, that mankind would live forever.

But now we know that from the fall sin has entered. So there's a spiritual hunger in every human that only Jesus alone can meet and satisfy.

And it's in our lives, only God can fill it. Nothing else in the world can do it, just Jesus. And when he says, I am the bread of life, he's telling us, I'm the only one who can satisfy this hunger of yours.

[17:39] Very similar to the woman at the well that we have the account of in the Gospels where she was looking for water and Jesus said, I can give you living water and you'll never thirst again with it.

And she said, give me this water. And eventually she realized and she was gifted grace and she came to faith and she was one of the first great examples of evangelism that we have in the Bible. But here he's telling us, I'm the bread of life and I can, I can, I can, I can solve this hunger of your soul. I'm the living bread and this bread conveys life and it brings true life to us.

Because when we take food for our bodies, it fills us and it strengthens us and we feel like new life has come into us physically. Well, when Jesus gives us this bread, this living bread for our souls, it fills us spiritually and it strengthens us and it sustains us and it meets our deepest needs.

And Jesus is saying here, I'm the manna, I'm the real manna that you're looking for. God, I'm the bread from heaven. I'm the one who has come down from heaven to give life to the world and he has promised not just life, but he has promised abundant life to every person who believes.

[19 : 15] And without him, without Jesus, all that you're facing is a real hunger and looking at when the time comes to pass from this world, when the time comes to die, is to be to an everlasting death and to the torment of hell.

And there's no escaping that. The Bible is so crystal clear with it. Jesus is offering the remedy. And he is the bread, he is the gift of salvation.

He is the sacrifice, God's sacrifice, who gave himself, who gave his body a Calvary, who hung on that cross at Calvary, who was nailed to that cross, and he suffered physically, as Isaiah tells us in chapter 52, to the point where he wasn't even recognizable.

He had got slaughtered that much in the preceding flogging and as he went up on that cross at Calvary. And not just that, but of course there was the three hours of darkness, where he endured the spiritual suffering, which we cannot enter into.

But thankfully there is sufficient revealed to us in this word that tells us this is what Jesus did. And Jesus tells us in John chapter 14, I am the way, I am the truth and the life.

[20 : 43] And he says this is exclusive because nobody can come to the Father except through me. It doesn't matter what else you hear, the word of God is very clear.

There is one way of salvation and it's by belief, by trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior. So these are blessings that we have.

The bread is not only life-giving, but it's satisfying. And Jesus says, here comes me, shall never hunger. They shall be satisfied. You know, when we run out of food or run short on food, it's so easy for us, isn't it?

If you go to the shop next door or you go in town to Tesco or the Co-op or the supermarket, stock up again, it's all there for us. But then it's going to run out again and again and you have to go back and go back and get more and more and more.

But Jesus says, the opposite is true with me. You shall be satisfied in the deepest recesses of your being. And let me tell you this, if you're not a believer in Christ tonight, if you haven't closed in, let me tell you this, that there is not one person, you will never ever find a person who has truly believed in Christ and has said, I've made a mistake.

[22 : 13] You'll never find that person, ever. You'll never find the person that says, believing in Jesus was a mistake, Jesus let me down, Jesus disappointed me, Jesus left me unsatisfied, never ever will you hear that.

Because Jesus satisfies to the deepest recesses of our beings. And that's the wonder of it all. He nourishes people spiritually and satisfies the longings of her soul.

So we have these great blessings and now thirdly there's this invitation. This invitation which only Jesus alone can extend to us. Verse 40 tells us this, for this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

So that matters. What a wonderful, wonderful invitation. And it actually reminds us of what's recorded for us in the Old Testament in Numbers chapter one and the account of the bronze serpent.

And for the people, there was an infestation of poisonous snakes amongst the children of Israel. people. Because they had turned and sinned against God as they did so often.

[23 : 41] And God's anger came down upon them and he sent a plague to them. And Moses pleaded for them and God told them, then you build this great big bronze snake and lift it up high.

And he said to the people, whoever looks at that bronze snake and believes in me and believes they will be healed, they shall be healed. And so they were.

And that is connected very, very strongly to John chapter 3 and verse 14 as well, where Jesus says, I, when I am lifted up, then all men will believe.

And that's when he was lifted up on the cross of Calvary. And that's where we have to look to, to Jesus being lifted up on the cross. Jesus, and in doing all that he did for us, in taking our sins upon himself, and giving his righteousness, his perfection to all of his people who believe.

That's this great invitation. Jesus has done it all, there's nothing for us to do. Don't try and get ourselves right, don't try and think, well, I know that I'm not in the right place to come to Jesus.

[24 : 58] He says, you're always in the right place to come to Jesus. Always. He will never turn you away. Doesn't matter where you, what you've been, what you've said, what you've done, that makes no difference.

Come to Jesus in true humility. Come to Jesus believing and with a real repentful and sorrowful heart.

And come to him believing that he is the one who can fix everything in your life and who can gift you this great salvation and I give you the word from the word, he will do it if you come to him with that genuine repentance spirit.

He'll come. That's what he asks. Whoever comes to me, whoever believes in me, he says that because he wants us to go to him and he wants us to get to know him as that friend, that real friend. And that's the blessing that every believer has. Having Jesus as their real friend who is with them every step of the way and when things get tough, he carries them.

[26 : 16] He carries them through the hard times. He's with them through the hard times. that's a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and that's what's required.

If you're hungry, you know, and I'm just going to finish with this, if you're hungry, you'll go and search out for some food, won't you? And you're looking for food that's going to satisfy your hunger. you might get the food out, throw it on a plate, but if you leave it on that plate, it's not going to do you any good, is it?

It's not doing you any good at all. You can look at it, you might even smell it, you may even handle it, and you might even chew it, just give it a quick chew in your mouth.

But it's still not doing you any good. You have to digest it, you have to eat it, you have to take it into yourself, you have to make it a part of yourself, you have to be joined to it.

[27 : 31] It's exactly the same with Jesus. And it says, whoever comes to me, whoever believes in me, whoever joins with me, whoever eats of this bread that I'm willing to give, so willing to give, that bread is himself.

Whoever will take me into that heart, then I will come and I will abide with them and I will be with them. the tragedy is there are so many people who are tasting, who are smelling, who are perhaps having a wee chew of the food, looking at the food, this food of the gospel, this food of salvation, but they're not digesting it and they're not taking it into themselves and they're not coming to Jesus. There's so many people who won't come. They're like starving people turning their backs on the best of food. Here's the gospel, here's the food.

You're starving, you're in great, great need of this gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ. And yet you turn away. And so many people say we don't want it.

Or people might say well not tonight, but I might want it further down the line. But certainly not tonight. Now is not the right time for me. You don't really find people doing that physically do you?

[29 : 20] Because if we're hungry we go for the food and we eat it. But it does happen spiritually.

And I just wonder is there anybody here this evening who is, for want of a better phrase, turning up their nose at this spiritual food, this offer of salvation that there is here this evening.

Because if you are and if you're going to do it once again, you're in such a dangerous place. Such a dangerous place and Jesus is saying to you come to me. You just come to me, every one of you who laborish and heavily and I'll give you that rest.

And you will have rest for your souls and you will have peace. You will have peace in your whole being. You need to tell him that you believe that only he alone can meet you at this point of the hunger.

He will feed you spiritually and he will fulfill your deepest need. He will give you this gift of grace. The gift of his precious grace.

Always here to help in time of need. You know, there's nothing, absolutely nothing can compare with the personal relationship that a Christian has with Jesus. And if you want to look at us doing

anything physically then occasionally in congregations, as you'll know from this congregation, we have times of communion when we sit at the Lord's table.

[30 : 53] And at these communion services then, you see the Lord's people are giving bread and they eat that bread, but it's symbolic of the body of Jesus.

And they drink the wine, it's symbolic of the blood of Jesus. But they take it with thankfulness for all that Jesus has done.

You know, this bread, it's so absolutely necessary, because without it, we're going to perish.

Anyone who doesn't have Jesus in their life, you're going to perish. It's available, and it's here, and it's within reach. This is this great offer.

It's free. And, you know, we're told that Isaiah tells us in chapter 55, why do you spend your money on food that's not bread? Why do you labor for that which is not spiritual bread?

[31 : 53] This is what's far more important. It's free, and it's also satisfying. It's satisfying.

One taste, even one taste of this special, precious life in Jesus Christ, and life will never be the same again.

I promise you that. Your life will never be the same again. Just as we sang, and the psalmist was wishing us in Psalm 34, oh, taste and see that God is good.

That's what we've been told. Taste and see that God is good. Revelation 7 tells us none of God's people will ever hunger anymore.

They'll hunger no more. This is sweet. This is lasting. And this spiritual food really is truly good for the soul. Jesus says, I am the bread of life, and I plead with you this evening.

[32 : 59] If you don't have Jesus, please go to him and just tell him, I need this bread. I need you, Jesus, and I need you now. Not tomorrow, but I need you now.

May the Lord bless these thoughts. Thank you. Thank you.