

New Life: John 6
Pastor Carlos Sibley
Sunday, September 30, 2018

Let's open our Bibles to the Gospel of John, chapter 6. We are working our way through this Gospel. It's humorous that on the day we open our Bibles to John chapter 6 with the story of the feeding of the 5,000, it is also the day of our church picnic. I like that built-in illustration and application!

If you were deciding to see a new movie and trying to learn what it was about, maybe you would pick up a handheld device or go to your computer or your tablet and Google that movie. You would probably be able to find a review of that movie. Let's say that four different locations come up for you to read about this particular movie. As you're reading about that particular movie and you go through four different individuals' reviews of that movie, something occurs to you by the time you've read all of those reviews. There are four different directions, four different perspectives, four different reviews, but yet all four of those reviewers talk about one particular scene in the movie. What would that say to you? That definitely would communicate to you that a big part of what happens in this movie comes through in this one particular scene.

Today when we come to John chapter 6, we have the only miracle that is recorded in all four Gospels. That's significant for us, because it gives us some indication that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - when they looked at the life of Jesus, there was this one event. There was this one happening, this one miracle that really communicates to us so much about the Good News of Jesus Christ. That miracle is this feeding of the 5,000. It might seem kind of familiar to you, and perhaps that's because it's in all four Gospels. But the significance there of the people being fed on the hillside by Jesus tells us so much about who Jesus is, what He came to do, who He claimed to be, and who He is supposed to be in our life every day.

So as we look at this passage today beginning in John chapter 6, this chapter has 71 verses. That's about 20 seconds per verse that we have this morning. Let's look first of all at the first 15 verses and read the account of the feeding of the 5,000.

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There

is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Notice with me verse 2 again: "and a large crowd was following him." Now go to the end of chapter 6 and look at verse 66. From verse 2 "a large crowd" followed him to verse 66 "After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him." Here's the question for today: what happens between verse 2 and verse 66 that would have a crowd following Jesus and then move to so many who began to turn back and no longer follow Him? If you read on in chapter 7 where we will get to next week, at least three times in that chapter it states that they tried to kill Him. They began to try to kill Him. But in chapter 6, when the crowds are following Him and the 5000+ are fed, it said they wanted to crown Him. What had happened for the crowd to go from wanting the crown Jesus to the crowd wanting to kill Jesus?

As we work for a few minutes through this passage of Scripture in this chapter, I want you to consider in your own life- are you a part of the crowd that's following for the benefits or the miracles, or are you going to be like those who turn away? What would cause you to turn away? I want to look at that today. When you look at this chapter of 71 verses, it is a massive chunk of material. I don't have an outline that is broken out so much about the individual verse content as I want to give you an outline of scenes and movements through the chapter. There are five of these. If you were looking at it like a play, it might read as the five scenes. Those five scenes of chapter 6 begin with miracles. Then you have this message that Jesus preaches. And then there's this mystery that He begins to speak about. The fourth scene is murmuring. And the fifth scene is the moment. There these five scenes that Jesus takes them through beginning with miracles. In chapter 6, you have two miracles. We already read about the first one, but there's a second one that's a part of chapter 6. You have this feeding of the 5,000 but chapter 6 also covers Jesus walking on the water. It's almost like icing on the cake. It's like a second punch of who Jesus is and the power that He has. Let's look at verse 16:

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea

became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea -

I don't even need a sermon on that. I just read that verse over and over and am amazed by it. Jesus Christ was walking on the water. And this wasn't some smooth glass like the morning lake. This was a nighttime storm that Jesus was walking across. Maybe some of you saw a couple of scenes from the Weather Channel a few weeks ago in North Carolina. There was one particular scene where a guy stepped down into the deep part of the water that was running, and as he was being interviewed, it showed two guys behind him who were walking right across the street. It looked just like two people walking on the water! It was hilarious!

With this particular scene, they are miles out into the sea, and Jesus defies gravity. He defies all of the elements with walking and standing and floating and sinking in water, and He just walks on the water to the boat. They think it's a ghost! He speaks to them, knowing that they're afraid.

- they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

Just a note here - the Greek word for "it is I" is the same word that is translated as "I am" in other passages of Scripture. It is *ego eimi*, and it means "I am." When He said, "Do not be afraid," it was His announcement that God is here. Jesus is here. The Great I Am is walking on the water. Don't be afraid. "Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." This scene is not mentioned again in this passage.

Just a word about those two miracles. So many things can be said about both of those and have been said over the years. I've preached from this passage in the other Gospels in the past. What we see here in the miracle of the bread and the loaves and the fish and the miracle of walking on water is this - Jesus is saying, "I can take the most basic needs of life and supply so abundantly, there will not only be enough, there will be enough plus some." Now, I'm not talking to you this morning about a prosperity gospel. I'm not talking to you about some kind of health gospel. What I'm talking to you about is a Savior that is bigger, stronger, mightier, and more powerful than anything that we come up against in life. That's Who He is. And in this moment, we see that whether it's food or fear, Jesus says, "I am." And in your situation today - whatever you're walking in, whether you feel like there's some deficiency, you feel like there's some lack, you feel like you're overwhelmed - know that the Savior of John 6 is the savior of September 30th. He says, "I am. Don't be afraid." Those are the miracles. Jesus takes these miracles, and He then moves to a message.

This sermon of Jesus begins to unfold here. And in this sermon of Jesus that begins in verse 22, Jesus' big idea of the sermon is: "I am the bread of life." This is the first of seven major "I am" statements from the Gospel of John. By the time we get through the end of the Gospel of John, you will have heard Jesus speak and teach on statements like "I am the bread of life," "I am the light of the world," "I am the resurrection and the life," "I am the good shepherd," and "I am the great physician." He makes these "I am" statements, and each one of them unpacks another treasure trove

of the incredible salvation that we have in the person of Jesus Christ. You can be a Christian today. You can know Jesus Christ today as your Lord and Savior and not know that He is the bread of life. But when you begin to study who Jesus is and what He means to us and the pictures that He uses about salvation, part of learning more and more about who we are in Christ and what we've received in Christ is unpacking these "I am" statements. And He is for us today saying right where we are today on September 30, "I am the bread of life." The most basic life sustaining nourishment of their day and through history is bread. We are going to unpack that message. He says, "If you believe that I am who I claim to be, you will have this life. You will have eternal life."

Remember the very purpose stated in John chapter 20. We need to keep coming back to it again and again every week. John said, "I wrote this book so that you might know that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing, you will have life." We've said it this week as we were studying together as pastors - "If we come to the end of the study of John next spring and people in the room leave saying over and over again 'I don't remember a lot about this study, but it seemed like every week they were saying that Jesus the Christ and that by believing we could have life,'" that would be a win. So what John is doing is stacking on layer upon layer, miracle upon miracle, sign upon sign, teaching upon teaching about the person of Jesus Christ is that He came from heaven as the anointed one. He is in this passage the bread of life.

He unpacks this sermon here to three audiences. This sermon is addressed first to the multitude, and then it shifts to being to the Jews. Then it shifts by the end of the chapter to being to the disciples. Let's look at verse 22:

On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 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.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Jesus said this in a very pointed way to the crowds. You see this subtle shift that He's beginning to really narrow the message and He's winnowing out the crowds. It's like He's saying, "Let's get down to it. I know why you're here." He puts His finger on their motives for seeking Him. He knows that they got fed and have come back for more food. But this a bigger story than that. He opens up this picture that what had happened on the hillside with feeding of the 5,000 was not just a miracle of multiplying food, it was a miracle to communicate who Jesus is.

He says, "you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life." He takes the whole event on the mountainside and he begins to turn it to moving people to see this was not just a physical feeding, this was a spiritual lesson. He is trying to open their eyes to see who He is when it comes not to earthly food, but to eternal life. That's the message that He's unpacking for them. Verse 28:

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you?"

I've got to pause there for a second. I wish we could get in Jesus' mind a little bit there. I'd be thinking, "Are you kidding me?! Did you see the boy's lunch? There were two fish! There were five loaves!" This would have been like pieces of pita bread, not like the brown loaves of bread we are familiar with. But the people say, "What else can you show us, Jesus?" Do we not sometimes do that? Jesus has spoken and through His answered prayers and His generosity to us, He has shown us Himself. He is faithful, and He keeps His promises to us. And after all of that, we say, "If You would just do *this* now."

So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

This has a little bit of the feel of the Samaritan woman at the well. Do you remember her when she said, "Give me that water so I won't have to come back to this well and draw water. If I've got some kind of water that's going to keep me from being thirsty every day physically, then give me that water?" And they said, "Will you give us that bread to keep us from being hungry? Give us that bread." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life."

What a moment. He is taking this massive miracle of feeding the 5,000 physically meeting their needs in abundance, and He turns it around for them to see something new. Just like they had that physical bread where He met their native hunger to the abundance and more - He wanted them to see that He is that sustenance for their spirit and for their soul. It's not just a temporary miracle that's happening in front of your eyes, this is an eternal miracle that is happening right before you. I am the bread life. I am the bread that lasts forever. He has this message for the crowd, or the multitude. Verse 35:

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and

yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me -

Let me stop here for a second and move down to verse 41:

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

This is a narrowing of the crowd. Jesus said that this is more than just earthly food. "I am the bread of life, it's about Me. It's not about loaves of bread and fish, and I've come down from heaven." Then in verse 41, the Jews begin to grumble about Him. Here Jesus begins to direct His teaching to the Jews. He says in verse 41:

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

He says to the multitude, and then He says to the Jews - "Yes, I am the Messiah. I am the one that came down from heaven." He is using that miraculous scene of multiplying earthly temporary bread and He turns it to show that He is eternal bread. He is the nourishment for eternal life. His phrase - "I am the bread of life" is Him identifying Himself as the Messiah and the way of salvation.

Let's move from this scene of miracles and the message to this third scene of the mystery. There's a mystery that happens as you read through these verses, all of a sudden when He's talking about bread, He begins talking about the sovereignty of God and what we might call the "doctrine of salvation." Verse 36: "But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." And verse 40: "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."

There are months of messages right there in the sovereignty of God and how the Father works. Let me say to you this morning that to me it is a great mystery. When you look at verse 29 where he says, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." Jesus calls them

to believe. Jesus calls you to believe today. There is a picture here of human responsibility. But at the same time, when you read through these verses, you see Jesus saying, "I do what the father does. The father draws people to Him. I call those whom the father has given to me." You have this mystery of human responsibility and God's sovereignty. What might seem like some kind of conflict in our eyes, we trust that is no conflict in God's eyes. Even as Jesus taught this, there was no hesitation of how any of this would work out. When we see in Scripture in Paul's writings the picture of human responsibility and God's sovereignty and salvation, it is never offered in some kind of way to discourage us. It is always offered in a way to encourage us about what has happened in our life with salvation. It is a great mystery.

For years I have valued the statement of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, where he responds to how some feel like these elements are in conflict with one another. Spurgeon says, "You don't have to reconcile friends." In this passage of Scripture, there is a mystery of how salvation works. When we stand this morning, we don't say, "Well, it's whatever God says will happen, therefore walk away." Instead we say, "Believe!" Trusting that God does His part in you and I, we come to Jesus and say, "What are we to do?" Jesus says, "Here's what you are to do - believe." Have you believed in Christ today?

The fourth scene is murmuring. The crowds, the Jews, the disciples - they all began to complain and grumble and murmur. Why? Well first of all, because of his claims about Moses. Back in verse 32, Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven." He goes back to Numbers 11 that talks about manna that fell from heaven. Moses is huge in their eyes! But Jesus comes on the scene saying, "I'm better than Moses. There's something better than manna." And He reminds them that their fathers ate the manna and died. Jesus is saying, "The bread that I'm bringing to you, it comes down from heaven. But it is a different kind of bread. It is an eternal bread. You eat this kind of bread and you live forever. You eat this bread and you have eternal life." They also grumbled and complained about His claims of deity.

Look at it in verse 47: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread -"

He's saying, "I've come down from heaven! I'm the Messiah! I'm the Christ! I'm God's Son!" The Jews and the officials of that day grumbled against Him, thinking that He couldn't be the Messiah. John wrote the whole book to debunk the thinking that He was only Joseph's son. Legally, yes, but eternally no. He came as the Son of God. John is showing us that for the purpose of us believing. Another reason they grumbled and complained was because of His claims about His flesh. Look in verse 51: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'"

I think this is a reference to Jesus dying on the cross. This becomes very grotesque. We can't dress this up. It is a hard teaching. It is a hard application.

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

Wow. if you walked in this morning and this was your first time in a Christian church and you hear this, you may be thinking, "I'm out." The whole context of this passage is Jesus taking the physical miracle that happened on the hillside to a spiritual application here with the audience. The same thing is going on here. He's taking the physical application of the flesh of the blood and He's saying, "For you to have eternal life, I've got to become your life. I've got to become your nourishment. Like you would take a piece of bread and you would take water and drink water and you would take bread and eat bread, you've got to take Me into your life. I come and I fill every cell. I fill every vessel. I fill every heartbeat. I fill every moment. I fill your spirit. Your soul, your body - I become your everything." It is a graphic picture of Him saying, "Just like you would be nourished by food, you've got to be nourished by Me."

This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

This is a hard teaching. Then what happens? It goes from the crowds following Him to the people turning away. Here's the closing moment. Look at verse 66:

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

I want to ask you today: will you turn away or will you believe? I'm offering to you the words of life - the bread of life. Will you feed on Him? Be nurtured by Him? Be nourished by Him? Believe today.