

# John 6

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[ 0 : 00 ] We finish by Jesus saying he was the bread of life. Verse 51 of chapter 6 of John's Gospel says, I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever.

This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves. How can this man give us flesh to eat?

And Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven.

[ 1 : 07 ] Our forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever. And he said this while teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

Amen. Well, can we turn back please to John chapter 6. It's been great to be here for three Sundays.

Especially this weekend when we've had the use of the flat from Friday night until today. And we had a lovely day of good weather yesterday.

So it's been a tremendous weekend. So thank you very much for that. Turning to John chapter 6, then a very long chapter, 71 verses. I'm going to try and cover the whole chapter.

Not in detail, obviously. But I want to give you the sweep of the whole chapter. But to focus our minds, I want to look particularly perhaps at verse 27.

[ 2 : 07 ] Jesus says to the crowd in the synagogue of Capernaum, verse 27. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

Do not work for the food that spoils. Work for the food that endures to eternal life. This was spoken to at least some of the crowd who shortly before had been fed by Jesus with five loaves and two fishes.

They'd followed him all the way back across the Sea of Galilee, back to Capernaum. And they gathered in the synagogue at Capernaum. And Jesus is now addressing at least some of that crowd of 5,000.

So looking first of all at the miracle. We haven't enough time to say much about the miracle. The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle that's been recorded in all four of the Gospels, apart from the resurrection of Jesus.

So it's obviously an important miracle. Remember that in John, the word miracle is the word signs. So the miracles are signs pointing to something, grabbing our attention.

[ 3 : 25 ] and pointing us to something. So this feeding of this crowd, this feeding of this 5,000 was meant to grab their attention and point them to something.

And it certainly did that. Each of the disciples gathered more leftovers after the meal than there was food to begin with.

This miracle made a huge impression. As I say, recorded in all four of the Gospels. And according to John, it happened at Passover time.

That is, it happened in the spring. And that's wonderfully confirmed by Mark, probably writing independently of John, who simply tells us in his account that the grass was green.

You might think, well, what a strange thing to say. I mean, grass is green, isn't it? Well, answer, no. Yes, in England, we have green and pleasant land.

[ 4 : 32 ] But, um, in Palestine, the grass is only green at springtime. So, um, when Mark says the grass was green, he's telling us that it happened at springtime.

And John tells us that it happened at Passover time. So there's a wonderful confirmation of the two Gospels there. So, um, taking just five loaves and two fish, provided by this little unknown, unnamed lad, Jesus uses that food to feed this crowd of 5,000 men.

So that's the miracle. The reaction to the miracle. Well, it certainly grabbed the attention of the crowd. And John tells us that the crowd was saying, maybe this Jesus is the prophet.

Moses had said in the book of Deuteronomy that God would send a prophet like him. They weren't to listen to spiritists and people who tried to contact the dead or anybody like that.

They were to listen to God's prophets. Because God was going to send a prophet with his word. A prophet like Moses. And many people at the time of Jesus were expecting the coming of this prophet, this Moses-like leader.

[ 5 : 54 ] And there were other people in the crowd who wanted to make Jesus king by force, whether he liked it or not, whether he wanted it or not. They were determined to make him king. Because as well as promising a prophet, the Old Testament scriptures promised a king.

We read about him at the beginning of our survey. A marvelous psalm. Psalm 72. About the future king that was coming and his kingdom, which was going to be a blessing to all nations.

And many Jews at the time of Jesus were expecting this prophet and they were expecting this king. And they wanted to make Jesus king by force after the feeding of the 5,000.

You must remember that at Passover, the Jewish people remembered how God had delivered them through Moses from foreign captivity in Egypt over a thousand years earlier.

And every year after that, they remembered that deliverance from foreign oppression, from Gentile oppression. And therefore, Passover was a volatile time politically in Israel.

[ 7 : 02 ] If God could deliver Israel from Egypt, maybe he could deliver Israel from Rome. Israel was now under the occupying armies of Rome. And every Passover time was a potential rebellion.

And the Roman governor would move from his very pleasant palace on the Mediterranean Sea at Caesarea and he would move into his palace at Jerusalem for the Passover week.

And extra troops would be billeted in Jerusalem for Passover week. Because they were expecting trouble. And it was at Passover that this miracle occurred.

And the people were saying, here's the prophet. Here's the Moses-like figure who's going to lead us. Here's the king. Here's the anointed one. Here's the Messiah.

And he's going to provide us with free food. Who wouldn't want a king who provided people with free food? Who wouldn't want a king who could feed 5,000 people with just a lad's lunch?

[ 8 : 12 ] A few fish butties. I don't know whether you use the word butty in Yorkshire. You do. Good. Five fish butties.

And Jesus fed 5,000 people with them. So who wouldn't want Jesus as their leader? Who wouldn't want Jesus as their prophet and their king?

Dolling out free food. Hence the pressure on Jesus to lead the people in a revolt against the Roman occupiers at this point. And it was because of this that Jesus hurriedly dismissed the crowd.

It's even clearer in Mark's gospel, in Mark's account, Mark puts it like this. And it's good to balance Mark with John at this point because without John, Mark sounds a bit strange.

Immediately after the feeding of the 5,000, according to Mark, immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd.

[ 9 : 13 ] After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. So he dismisses the crowd, makes his disciples get into a boat, sail over to the other side of the lake, and he goes off into the mountains, into the hillside to pray.

What's it all about? Well, John tells us the crowd wanted to make him kick. The crowd wanted him to be the Moses-like prophet who would lead them in a revolt against the Roman occupier and provide them indefinitely with free bread.

Remember Jesus' temptation? One of the temptations, in fact, the first of the temptations was turn these stones into bread. If you're the Son of God, turn these stones into bread.

And Jesus could have done it. He could have done it. He could have turned those stones into bread. But he says, Get behind me, Satan. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

I'm not going to be that kind of Messiah. I'm not going to be that kind of Christ who can just use his power to provide bread either for myself well, yes, on occasion I will provide bread for others as he did on this occasion.

[10:29] But that's not the kind of Messiah I'm going to be. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. So we've got the miracle, we've got the reaction of the crowd to the miracle.

Then we've got this exhortation. Back in the synagogue of Capernaum, at least some of the crowd gathered and perhaps they were disappointed that Jesus had not responded to their enthusiastic call for him to take on the role of the new Moses and to become their king.

Maybe that disappointed them, I'm sure it did. It obviously did from the tone of the rest of the chapter. And this is the background to this statement in verse 27. Jesus says to the crowd, Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. Do not work for the food that spoils. They've missed the real point of the miracle. They've seen the miracle, but they've not seen its significance, its significance.

They've missed the sign. They've seen the miracle, but they've missed the sign. They can't see what it's all about. Do not work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life.

[11:57] Now Jesus isn't saying here that ordinary physical food isn't important. And nor is Jesus saying that we shouldn't work for our daily bread. Jesus himself worked as a carpenter or a builder.

The word is broader than just carpenter. It's any kind of building work. He was the local builder. Jesus worked as a builder for most of his adult life.

He earned his daily bread like everybody else. He told us to pray for our daily bread. In fact, other accounts of this incident in Mark and Matthew and Luke tell us that the reason why Jesus performed the miracle was because of his concern and compassion for the hungry crowd.

And later the apostle Paul would emphasize to some overexcited Christians who thought that they were too spiritual to work or thought that the second coming was going to happen probably the day after tomorrow or something and therefore why bother to go to work if Jesus is coming again?

Paul tells them in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 that if a man will not work he's talking to Christians here if a man will not work he shouldn't eat. Not if he can't work or if there isn't any work for him to do but if he will not work if he could refuse if he could work and he refuses to do so because he's lazy well then he shouldn't eat.

[13:28] And Paul says watch out for people like that in your congregation. Christian congregations can be soft touches they can attract people like that. Watch out for people who won't work and separate yourself from them.

Make sure that they know that you disapprove of that and encourage them to work for their daily bread. And the Apostle Paul himself works as a tent maker a leather worker when you think of tents don't think of the sort of tents you go camping in today think of tents that people lived in permanently made out of leather a leather worker the Apostle Paul worked as a leather worker in order to earn his food and to be dependent on no one as an example to other Christians who he wanted to behave in the same way.

So Jesus isn't forbidding daily work or saying that ordinary physical food isn't important. He's not saying that at all.

But he is saying that ordinary physical food will just give us ordinary physical life. That's all it can do. It perishes and those who eat it will perish.

It doesn't matter how much they eat they'll perish. And therefore Jesus says we should give at least as much thought and effort to obtaining food that endures to eternal life as we do to obtaining food that perishes.

[15:10] There's food that's just for this age and there is food that will give us life in the age to come. That's what the word eternal means. There is food for this age and there is food for the age to come.

No matter how well we eat our food will only extend our lives briefly in this world and sooner or later we'll die. Jesus says that there's a food that gives us life in the world to come and we should make sure that we get that food.

That's what he's saying here. Isn't it the case that people today are totally taken up with their lives in this world their lives in this age? The food that people are really interested in fanatical about today is their daily physical food.

For most people in this world this means the constant struggle to actually get the food they need to survive and that's a struggle with which Jesus would have sympathized and with which we should sympathize.

But for us in the West it means television programs virtually every night showing us how to cook more and cook better and cook more exotic meals.

[16:31] It means celebrity chefs. It means people who are willing to pay a fortune for a fine dining experience. Just look at the best sellers the best selling hardbacks in this country.

The best selling hardbacks in this country are usually cookery books and dieting books. That's what it's come to in the Western world. Jesus says man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

However fine our dining it will only extend or probably actually shorten our time in this world. It will not give us eternal life.

So Jesus says do not work for the food that perish in. Work. Put some thought into put some effort into the food that endures to eternal life.

And then this exhortation so we've got the miracle we've got the reaction from the crowd we've got the exhortation to the crowd by Jesus and then we've got a tremendous claim.

[17:43] A tremendous claim. Jesus tells the crowd that he can give them this food that endures to eternal life.

Verse 27 Do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you. I can supply this food he said.

I can give you the food for the age to come. I can give you the food that endures to eternal life. And the crowd assumes that he's talking about a food that they'll have to work hard to get.

So they go on to ask him what they should do to get this food. Verse 28 What must we do to do the work God required?

Now, obviously we've got to do something difficult. We've got to work hard to get this food that endures to eternal life. And Jesus' response is amazing.

[18:47] Verse 29 The work of God is this to believe in the one he has sent. Believe in the one he has sent.

that's what you do to get the food that endures to eternal life. To believe in Jesus. To believe in Jesus is the phrase that we come across over and over again in John's Gospel.

It's much more than believing that. It's believing in or even actually literally believing into believing into the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's trusting Jesus. It's trusting the person of Jesus. It's not knowing all about Jesus. It's trusting the person of Jesus.

It's depending on Jesus. It's relying on Jesus as our saviour and our teacher and our king. It's life changing to believe in Jesus.

[19:54] It's not just like some people decide that they believe in the Loch Ness Monster. They go on holiday to Drum the Rocket or somewhere like that on Loch Ness and they buy a book in a shop about the Loch Ness Monster.

They read it and they think maybe there's a Loch Ness Monster. And they become Loch Ness Monster believers. The world is divided into people who believe in the Loch Ness Monster and people who don't.

But it doesn't make much difference to anybody's life. It doesn't make much difference to your life if you believe in the Loch Ness Monster or not. Believing in Jesus isn't like that at all.

Not like that at all. Believing in Jesus means you trust the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You trust.

You rely. You depend. You count on Jesus. As your saviour. As your lord.

[20:55] As your king. And of course you obey him. If you trust anybody you trust you will obey. If you disobey a person it simply means you don't believe them. You don't trust them. They're not dependable. If you believe on the Lord Jesus you will obey the Lord Jesus.

Life changing to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said want believe in the one he sent.

Believe in me. Trust in me. Well how does the crowd respond at this? Well I think the crowd was disillusioned with Jesus now.

Disappointed that he clearly turned down their demand that he should take on the role of a purely political and materialistic prophet or messiah or king. It was clear that he didn't want to be this kind

of future Moses who was going to dole out free bread to everybody.

So they asked him for a sign believe it or not. They've just been fed with five loaves and two small fish and they asked him for a sign to confirm his claim that they should believe in him.

[ 22 : 11 ] So they say well look Moses fed Israel with supernatural food we call it manna. Moses fed Israel with supernatural food for 40 years. All you've done is feed 5,000 people with some supernatural food on one occasion.

So if you're saying Jesus that you want us to follow you rather than Moses which is what he was saying because at the end of chapter 5 he says you've set your hopes on Moses if if you believed in Moses you would believe in me because he wrote about me if you're wanting us Jesus to turn from our ultimate allegiance to Moses to our ultimate allegiance to you you'd better do something as impressive as Moses did.

The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 was impressive but it didn't equal the accomplishment of their great leader and hero Moses.

So how does Jesus respond to this? Well they've missed the point again. He says look Moses did give you supernatural food from God but it was only physical food.

It kept them going through the wilderness but eventually they died they died in the wilderness.

Verse 58 Your forefathers ate manna and died.

[ 23 : 55 ] Your forefathers ate manna and died. But he who feeds on this bread will live forever. Manna was only physical food.

Whatever it was it was only physical food. It kept people going through the wilderness until they died. But Jesus says the true bread from heaven the true bread from God gives life not only in this age but also in the age to come.

And this leads to Jesus' great claim one of the great I am's of John's gospel verse 35 I am the bread of life. Jesus gives and Jesus is the life giving bread who gives eternal life not just physical life that will eventually die but he gives us life eternally he gives us life for the age to come.

So Jesus says I am that bread. It wasn't Moses who gave you the true bread from heaven the true bread from heaven is me. I give the bread and I am the bread.

If you come to me you'll never hunger. If you believe in me you'll never thirst. Bread in Israel at this time as for most people in the world today is indeed the staff of life.

[ 25 : 20 ] People depend on it for life. I was reading a history of Britain in the 20th century and the first chapter was talking about how people lived in the first decade of the 20th century, 1900 to 1910.

And it said that most people just lived on bread and butter. That was the diet of most people, bread and butter. Hardly ever had meat, they just ate bread and butter most of the time.

And Jesus is saying I am the bread of life. Just as people depended on bread for life, physical life. Jesus is saying that he is the essential food that we need to give us life in the age to come, eternal life.

He is just as indispensable for spiritual life as physical bread was for ordinary people in those days for physical life.

Okay, so we're getting there. We're more than halfway through the chapter already. And at this point, Jesus takes a further step and he says something so staggering that even some of those who professed to be his disciples turned away from him in disgust.

[ 26 : 43 ] In fact, as it was read this morning, the passage I'm now going to refer to, didn't you almost feel a slight sense of disgust?

What precisely, says Jesus, is this food, this bread that he is going to supply for the life of the world? He's already said it's me, I'm the bread of life.

But more precisely, what is this bread that is going to give life to the world? Well, says Jesus, it's my flesh.

And he then goes on to say, unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we don't have and will never have eternal life. The only way to eternal life is to eat the flesh of Jesus Christ and drink his blood.

It sounds abhorrent to us, it must have sounded even worse to Jews who were strictly forbidden in the law of Moses to eat anything containing blood. And Jesus says to these Jews, unless you eat my flesh, drink my blood, you'll never have eternal life, life in the age to come.

[ 28 : 02 ] So what did Jesus mean? Well, Jesus is telling us here in no uncertain terms that it is not by teaching us, it is not even by ruling us, that he will give us eternal life.

He will give us eternal life by dying for us. Flesh and blood here speak of his sacrificial death for our sin.

To believe in Jesus is to believe in Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins, the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

It is Christ crucified who gives life to the world. He gives life to the world by giving us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink.

Now obviously Jesus is not intending us to take him literally. One of the features of John's gospel in almost every chapter in the first half of John's gospel is that Jesus says something and people take him literally when it's obvious that he intends them not to take him literally.

[ 29 : 15 ] For instance in chapter 2 he says destroy this temple and in three days I'll build it again. The Jews think he's talking about the temple in Jerusalem. He's not.

He's talking about his own body, his resurrection body. In chapter 3 he says to Nicodemus unless you're born again you'll never enter the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus says how can a man be born again when he's old? Can he enter into his mother's womb a second time and be born? He takes it literally and Jesus never intended him to take it literally.

In chapter 4 he says to a woman at the well, if you drink the water I will give you, you'll never thirst. And she says sir give us this water so that I won't have to keep coming to this well.

She takes him literally. Jesus was talking spiritually. And you can go on and there are other examples of that in John's gospel and I haven't time to mention them this morning although to be absolutely honest with you I can't actually just remember them this morning but they're there in John's gospel in almost every chapter.

[ 30 : 25 ] And here likewise Jesus does not intend us to take him literally. we sometimes speak of someone devouring a book don't we?

We sometimes speak of somebody drinking in a sermon or drinking in somebody's word.

That's what Jesus means here. he means personal believing reception.

That's what eating and drinking is. Personal you have to do it. Nobody else can do it for you.

Personal believing reception of Jesus.

So how do we eat his flesh and drink his blood? We personally receive to ourselves his sacrifice on the cross for our sins and we depend on it just as we depend on food and drink for life.

[ 31 : 34 ] We depend on the sacrifice of Jesus for eternal life. Now one highly disputed question which I can only mention very very briefly this morning is whether or not Jesus is speaking here about the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper for those of you who may not know is the occasion when Christians take and eat and drink bread and wine in order to remember the death of their Savior. There are two extremes here.

Some people think that he's speaking of the Lord's Supper exclusively. This is the Roman Catholic view. that Jesus is saying here that unless you celebrate the Lord's Supper properly consecrated by a proper priest, that is a Roman Catholic priest, you will not have eternal life.

Others don't think he's referring to the Lord's Supper at all. throne. And in support of that is the fact that it hadn't yet been instituted and it would be instituted by Jesus on the night on which he was betrayed at a private meal with his disciples and it would be strange if he was referring to it here to a largely unbelieving crowd.

So I don't think we have to say that Jesus has the Lord's Supper in mind at all here necessarily.

He's simply saying that we have to feed, we have to feast our souls on what he did for us at the cross of Calvary when he died for our sins.

[ 33 : 18 ] Now, having said that, surely now that Jesus has instituted the Lord's Supper, one occasion when we do feed by faith on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is when we eat the bread which is a token of his body given for us and drink the wine which is a token of his blood shed for us.

When we do that by faith, spiritually, surely on that occasion we are indeed feeding on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we're telling ourselves and we're telling God that just as bread and wine give us physical life and physical joy, so the work of Jesus on the cross as he took the punishment for our sins gives us spiritual and eternal life.

Since Jesus gave us these visible reminders of his death, it would be wrong to neglect them. And we should therefore see believing participation in the Lord's Supper as an important and essential means of grace.

So that's what I would say about that highly disputed question. What's the reaction of the disciples? What's the reaction of the crowd and indeed some of his professing disciples to this?

[ 34 : 37 ] what's the truth? Most people don't believe him and a few people do. Most people don't believe the Lord Jesus.

What must we do to do the works of God they had said? Jesus answered the work of God is to believe in the one he has sent. Do they believe? No they don't.

Verse 36 As I told you you have seen me and still you do not believe. Verse 41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said I am the bread that came down from heaven.

They said isn't this Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? How can he now say I came down from heaven? Verse 52 The Jews began to argue sharply among themselves how can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Verse 60 On hearing it many of his disciples said this is a hard teaching who can accept it? Verse 64 There are some of you who do not believe.

[ 35 : 43 ] For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. And verse 66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. So there's a large number of both the crowd and even of his professing disciples who will have none of this.

And even some of his professing disciples leave him at this point. So Jesus' claims here are met with massive unbelief. But a few people believed.

Verse 67 You do not want to leave too do you? Jesus asked the twelve. Simon Peter answered him Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life.

We believe and know that you are the holy one of God. A few people believe. Most didn't a few did. That was the reaction of the crowd.

Final question How did Jesus respond to this unbelief of the many and this faith of the few? He wasn't fazed by the unbelief of the many at all.

[ 36 : 53 ] Look at verse 37. All that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.

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. 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.

Look at 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. It is written in the prophets, they will all be taught by God.

Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. And look at verse 65. In response to the unbelief of many, he went on to say, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled me.

So how does Jesus deal with the unbelief of the many and the faith of the few? Well, quite simply, he simply says this. He says, in a world of unbelief, there are those whom the Father has given me.

[ 38 : 11 ] And those whom the Father has given me will come to me. They will believe in a world of unbelief. They'll believe.

They will come to me. In fact, the Father will draw them to me. And do you know that word draw is the same word as is used in the last chapter of John's Gospel of the disciples dragging a net full of 153 fish from the boat onto the beach.

Jesus says that's what it will take. to get an unbeliever to believe in me. But it'll happen. It will happen. My Father will draw those whom the Father has given me unto me and they will come to me.

They will come to me. And I will not drive any of them away. And I will give them eternal life. And I will raise every one of them up on the last day.

And I will not lose one of them. But I will raise them up on the last day. That's how Jesus responds to unbelief. And that's how we should respond to unbelief.

[ 39 : 26 ] We've been hearing that there's a lot of bad news. Some good news as well. Thank God for that. But keep in your mind at all times Christian people in this world of unbelief which will not consider the fantastic claims of the Lord Jesus Christ.

that will not come to him that they might have life. Keep in mind all the time that there are those who will. There are those who will.

All that the Father has given me will come to me. And that him who comes to me I will never drive away. And that should be a huge encouragement as we share the gospel with our fellow men and women.

Let's pray. Thank you Father for your word which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path and which is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and which is profitable for instruction for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness that the man or the woman of God may be fully furnished for every good work.

We give you our thanks for your word in Jesus' name. Amen.