
LIFE IN HIS NAME

THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6:22-40

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. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” 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? 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.”

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, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 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.”

In my house I am often assigned the task of picking out a movie. It's not an easy task, but one where I go on-line and I see what we can stream or purchase there to view. I have a certain weakness -- at least I have been told that I have a certain weakness for movie trailers. You know, before you pick the movie you want to watch the trailer. You want to see what the movie is about, right? That's a natural desire. My problem is, I just so much enjoy the trailers, I will just sit there and watch trailer after trailer after trailer, and 20 or 30 minutes later my dear wife is saying to me, "Are you ever going to pick a movie?"

Of course, the trailer now tells you the whole story, right? You feel like you have seen the movie after you have seen two minutes, so I feel like I have watched 20 movies in the last 25 minutes of viewing trailers. But one of the upsetting things for me is the way they grab quotes and portray characters. When you watch the movie, it's often not like the trailer. In fact, a lot of times the trailer is much better than the movie. There will be this one little quote or one little scene, and you are like, "Wow! I want to see that. I want to see more of that!" Then when you get into the movie, it's nothing like that. The character is nothing like what they describe the character to be when you watch the trailer.

Some of you are saying, "That's life. Life is not living up to the trailer. My expectations of what life would be and could be, all of those things that I thought" - and you fill in the blank - "all that I thought this would be is not exactly what I bargained for."

In the New Testament Greek, there are two words that are used for life. In English we have one word, but in Greek there are two words. I don't often give you the Greek, but sometimes it's really helpful and really clear. In the Greek, the two words are "zoe" and "bios." Biological/bios speaks of physical life, natural life. But then there is this word "zoe." Some of you probably have a friend or you know someone who is named Zoe. It's also a word for life, but it speaks of a quality of life, a vitality. Jesus uses that word "zoe" in this text throughout. When he is speaking about eternal life and a duration of life, it's not just existence. It's a quality of life. There is a fulfillment that's promised in Jesus Christ.

You have here in verse 35 one of the famous "I am" statements in the book of John. There are seven times in the book of John where Jesus says, "I am" and then concludes with a metaphor. Here, it is "I am the bread of life." Those seven statements are:

- I am the bread of life.

- I am the light of the world.
- I am the gate.
- I am the good shepherd.
- I am the resurrection and the life.
- I am the way, the truth, and the life.
- I am the true vine.

These seven statements are seven metaphors that Jesus uses to teach us about himself. But those seven statements are more than just metaphors, because they hearken back to a very important passage of scripture and concept that's found throughout the Old Testament.

Some of you who are familiar with the life of Moses know a little bit about his call experience, recorded in Exodus Chapter 3, where Moses is out in the wilderness himself. He sees a bush that's burning and is not consumed. God meets him in that burning bush experience and speaks to him and calls him to go back to Egypt to be his leader, his servant, his messenger, to lead the people of Israel out of slavery.

If you know that story, you remember that Moses was not cooperative with God. He argued with God. He thought he wasn't a good candidate, that God had made a poor selection, so he tried to ask God these various questions. You know, "Who am I to do this great task?" One of the questions that he asked God was, "What is your name? When I go, they will ask me who sent you and what name will I give them?" And God answered that question -- it's a very important part of the revelation of God to us - with "I AM THAT I AM. You will tell them "I AM THAT I AM."

Some of you have heard the covenant name of God, "Yahweh." In Hebrew "I AM" takes these four consonants: YHWH. When filled in with the vowels we say, "Yahweh," and it is the verb of being: I am. We speculate to some degree, but begin to try to look at the nuance of all that God is communicating when he speaks to us that way. We begin to think, "Okay, God is saying to us that he doesn't take his cue or his meaning from anyone else or anything else." "I am. I am self-sufficient, independent. I am not in need or defined by anything or anyone else. I have always been, I am, I always will be. I am unchanging. I am perfect."

God reveals this very important truth about his nature in that experience with Moses: "I AM."

When you get to that in the Old Testament it is normally translated "THE LORD." You will notice in

your Old Testament English text, it will have “THE LORD,” and it will have small upper case – it’s a unique printing – and it signifies that that’s the name of the Lord, the covenant name of God.

So what does that mean now in John? When Jesus (and on occasion he does this in the gospel of John) just says, “I am” without an object, without a predicate -- here, the first of seven times, “I am the bread of life” -- what is Jesus saying? He is claiming to be divine. He is using the covenant name of God personally. He is teaching that he not only leads us to life, not only gives us that which is life, he is life. He is God and the son of God, the second person of the trinity.

So we come to this text today. This is an unusually long introduction, but it’s important to get the context. Chapter five ended with this. I don’t expect you to remember, but let me remind you that toward the end of Chapter five, Jesus is explaining that there are certain evidences for trusting in him. There are witnesses. Remember, he talked about how scripture pointed to him, how his works testify that he has been sent by the Father. And when he talked about scripture, he got specific and even said specifically that Moses testified to Jesus. What he is claiming here is that all that Moses did, he fulfills. At the very end of that chapter, in verses 46 and 47, we read this. He is rebuking them for their unbelief and he says, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

This is what happens. That’s how Chapter 5 closes. We are in our third message of Chapter 6, and all of Chapter 6 is setting up this parallel look between Jesus and Moses. Moses gave manna and Jesus fed the 5000. There is a miracle of food that takes place. As we explained when we looked at the feeding of the 5000, it was actually the feeding of approximately 20,000, a much larger group -- 5000 men plus women and children. There is this miracle. When we read through all 71 verses, by the time we get to the end of the chapter you are going to see, as you see some in today’s text, they are making the connections. They want Jesus now to do another manna miracle -- something even greater than the feeding of the 5000, something even greater than the giving of manna -- some kind of “wow” miracle, as if they had not seen something spectacular already.

So, there is the miracle of the food. What’s the next miracle that happens in John Chapter 6? Jesus walks on water. Moses leads the people out and parts the Red Sea. There is the miracle of the water. Jesus walks on water. The comparison begins to build.

We are told that this is all happening during the Passover. Moses instituted the Passover. Jesus is the Passover Lamb of God. Now Jesus will settle in to that picture and explicitly teach that he is the bread of life.

We want to break this down into three parts to understand what Jesus wants to communicate to us through this image that he is the bread of life. The first is:

- I. Work for food that lasts.

That is found in verses 22-27. We are told that the next day the crowd figures out that Jesus has gotten to the other side of the sea somehow, but it doesn't make sense. They know that something unusual has taken place. They ask Jesus, but he doesn't tell them. He doesn't tell them about his miracle of walking on the water. Instead, in verse 26 he says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

We see this theme now reoccurring that we have seen throughout the book of John, that there is a certain response that is right when it comes to miracles. We want to understand that miracles are signs pointing us to Jesus and teaching us about Jesus, teaching us about God and the reality of God. Jesus rebukes them here and says, "You know, you didn't really see the miracle, see the sign, and come wanting to understand that. You came because you liked having your stomach full." This is an even sharper rebuke than, "You just want to see the supernatural." Then he tells them this: "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." Work for food that endures. Work for food that lasts. Do not labor for the food that passes away.

I have this little pep talk that I give my kids to help them academically. Most of my kids are in some form of college or grad school right now in this season. So I take them through this little pep talk, some of them more than others. "You have to prepare well and perform well." Even as I start to say this, some of them are rehearsing this in their minds. The idea is that when you get into a class, there is a season of preparation. You have to give yourself to preparation so that when you are examined you will be ready. But then when you get to the test, or the essay, or whatever it is, you have to perform in that moment. It doesn't happen automatically. It helps to see these two seasons -- that there is one mindset for preparation and there is one mindset for performance. When you get into performance, it does not help you to say, "I wish I had prepared well" or "I wish I had prepared differently." Even if you do prepare well, you have to get in the right mindset to say,

“I’ve got to go in. I’ve got to be sharp. I’ve got to think. I’ve got to focus. I’ve got to follow-through. I’ve got to now perform.” It’s really just a very simple work ethic that I want to encourage them with.

It’s not foolproof. You know, it doesn’t work if you don’t know what the professor wants. You see, there is a point where a good professor tells you what he is looking for. He tells you, “Hey, I am going to test you on this. Pay attention to the lectures, because most of what I test will be on the lectures,” or “Pay attention to the reading, because most of the test will be out of the reading.” He tells you what the end game is.

I actually did better in school than I should have because I just went in and tried to figure out the end game. I wasn’t that smart. There were a lot of people that were much smarter than I am, and they were the kind of people that could go in and take a test and not know how the professor was going to test, but they just knew everything, it seemed, and they did well. I went in and knew nothing, but I found out what that professor was going to test, and I did better. A lot of people were just like, “Wow, he’s not that smart, but he...wow!”

You need to know the end game. Jesus is saying to this whole crowd of people, “You don’t know the end game. You are laboring for the wrong food! You were made for eternity! And you are working like this life is all that matters!”

Jesus taught a story about a man we call the rich fool. It came on an occasion when two brothers came to Jesus to argue in front of Jesus about their inheritance. They asked Jesus to help them divide the inheritance. I’m sure that’s a blessing – to know that you might pass away and your children are just, “Dad’s gone, but forget about that. Let’s argue over who gets what.” Well, that was the situation, and Jesus uses it as an occasion to tell them to be on their guard against covetousness.

Then he told a story about a rich man who produced an abundance and said to himself, “You know what I’m going to do? I’m going to build bigger barns.” So he built bigger barns and stocked them full. Then he said to himself, “Wow, I’ve got everything. I’m just going to relax now. I say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax. Eat, drink, and be merry.’” Luke 12:20-21: “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

If you look at various investment agencies, they are always advertising, asking this question: “How much do you need to retire? Do you have enough?” Jesus takes that conversation to a whole new level. “Are you ready for eternity? Are you thinking about eternity?” Retirement is not exactly a biblical idea. John Piper said recently, “Retirement is all throughout the bible. It’s called heaven.”

We understand that, yeah, if God grants us longevity we won’t work with the same energy, the same strength, perhaps. The pace of life will change. But the idea that “I’m going to work now so I can coast and just enjoy pleasure in the final season that I want to extend as long as possible” is not a biblical idea. God wants you to go out in a blaze of glory. He wants you to be 90 years old on the mission field, driving off the cliff because you can’t see anymore. That’s the way to go, right? Isn’t it better to do that and stand before Jesus, “I’m sorry, I thought the road went straight” as opposed to “You know, I was going to birdie that hole.” Which is the better testimony to stand before God?

Well, this sermon is not about retirement exactly, but it is about eternity, and Jesus is just so clear. He is saying to you and me, “All that is uncertain. Labor for that which is certain, that which is eternal. You were made for eternity.” That’s #1. Work for food that lasts.

II. Trust in Jesus.

Verses 28 through 34. The natural question in this section of the text is, “Okay, what is that labor? What is that work? What do I do to labor for the food that lasts for eternity?” And Jesus is very straightforward: “This is the work: Believe in me. This is what God wants from you.” Verse 29: “Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’”

The lesson here is that you cannot live physically without food; and you cannot live eternally, spiritually and fully, without Jesus. Jesus is taking this graphic lesson of food to illustrate for us this lesson about eternity. The discussion then leads into this whole debate about the manna. Now they want a sign. Verse 30: “So they said to him, ‘Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you?’” This always baffles me, because Jesus is doing these miracles right in front of them. But because they don’t see the miracles as signs pointing to Jesus, they want to put their faith in the miracle rather than in Jesus, and because of that, they don’t believe. They just keep asking for another sign.

We can make that same mistake. We can have this kind of mode of evaluation where we act like we disapprove of what God has done in our lives, and we put God to the test and say, "Well, God just hasn't done things the way I think he should do them." And "I don't think that a God like this should do this." And "I expect this, so therefore I don't believe."

Jesus enters into this conversation with them and what we discover is that they are looking for this manna miracle. Jesus reveals, "You don't understand the meaning of manna." Moses didn't get to go into the Promised Land. If you remember his story, he led the children of Israel for 40 years. You know, if you are Moses and you have this mass of people in the wilderness, your biggest need, really, is food and water, right? You might add protection and shelter. Those things come quickly, but this whole mass of people is going to starve and die of thirst if this need isn't met.

When Moses gets to the end of his life, he has this little season where right before he dies and they go in without him under the leadership of Joshua to take the Promised Land, he recounts to them God's revelation and God's journey with them. That's the book of Deuteronomy. In Chapter 8 he tells them the lesson of the manna as he looks back at what God has done.

This is what he says in verse 3 of Chapter 8: "And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know" (it was a miracle, it was something previously unknown) "that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." Jesus is trying to teach the lesson that Moses was trying to teach the children of Israel way back -- that God uses physical hunger to teach us that we cannot spiritually live apart from him, apart from his word. Just as we will die without food, we will die eternally without Jesus.

We have a tradition in our family. Whenever one of our children turns 13, we do a rite of passage. We do two things. We do a Father/Son or a Mother/Daughter trip and we take that child away and communicate to them that we believe that they have become of age, that they are a man or a woman. They haven't arrived. They have a lot to learn, but we have adult expectations.

These rites of passage are very important in life, I would just say as an aside. Some of you have built into your various cultures and heritages certain traditions when turning 15 or turning 16, or graduation. I want to tell you to seize those moments to speak into your child's life and to communicate adult expectations, because sometimes you will meet people who are 25 and 35 and

45, and they still act like children. It's like no one has ever told them, "Grow up. It's time to be an adult."

So we have these two little traditions. One is this trip. Secondly, for a son we ask men in his life to come and to speak into his life. For our daughter we ask ladies to come and to speak into her life, just to communicate what it means to be a man, or what it means to be a woman.

When one of my sons and I took a little trip, it was a unique occasion, because we adopted him at 12. We tried to push back his Father/Son trip. He didn't speak English when he came. He spoke his tribal language. Everything was new. He must have surely thought we were just crazy people. So here I am, taking this trip. One of the things we talk about on this trip is the birds and the bees. We want, if possible, for our children to hear about...I'm going to say it...sex...said it out loud...to hear about it from us. I had no idea what he was going to know or not know. I didn't know what he had experienced in the first 12 years of his life. It was a delightful experience with this son.

At his dinner and in the occasion he had received some money, and I asked him, "What are you going to do with this money?" I will never forget what he said to me on that occasion. He said, "Well you know, Dad, I have never had money in my life that I didn't spend on food." I know many 13 and 14-year-olds who have never spent money on food, unless it was junk food. I don't know that the impact of what Jesus is teaching here hits us.

Some of you know what it is to be hungry. Some of you know what it is to face starvation. Some of you grew up or you experienced not knowing where the next meal would come from, and there was a moment by moment trusting and seeking the Lord. Many of us seated here today go home to a refrigerator, to food for several days or a week, and we have easy access to it. Jesus is drawing on this metaphor. We know, and for most of history people have really known practically that you starve without food. You starve without Jesus. You die an eternal death unless you have Jesus.

He powerfully brings home this lesson. In it, he teaches that our most humbling needs, our most basic needs should teach us of our ultimate need of God and God's word and God's savior for us. So, what is the work of God? Here is the beauty of the metaphor, the twist. You don't labor for it, you receive it as a gift by trusting in Jesus. He does the labor. He brings his righteousness for you, and gives himself as a sacrifice that you might live eternally. Give yourself toward that pursuit. Trust in Jesus.

III. _____

_____ shall never thirst. I just want to read the rest of this section, because Jesus has a train of logic here that helps us understand that he satisfies ultimately and that we are secure in him.

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, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, (I think that's a reference to the bronze serpent that we looked at earlier in our study of John) and I will raise him up on the last day.

Here is his thinking. You act like Moses gave you manna, but Moses didn't give you manna, God gave you manna. God gave you manna and God gave you me. I am the bread of life. I am the gift of God to you, so that you will live eternally. Understand that Jesus' entire view here is centered not on what we do to get eternal life -- this is the amazing thing -- the whole passage is just packed with this powerful promise of the sustenance, the sufficiency of Jesus. It's not about what you do -- it's about what he has done. Jesus says, "Listen, if you belong to me, it's because the Father gave you to me." He starts off in the corporate, in the general, and then he narrows it to the singular, "And I will not lose a single one of you." It's powerful! "You are secure in me. I satisfy -- for all of eternity."

These are wonderful statements. "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" -- verse 37. Verse 39 -- "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." So, point II - Trust in Jesus. This will help you, dear Christian. If you are a Christian it will help you. If you are not a Christian it will direct you to what it means to be a Christian and help you.

Sometimes we think, "Okay, I trust in Jesus. I believe in Jesus. I put my faith in Jesus," and we make the object of our faith our faith, and that's bad thinking. The object of your faith is Jesus. Jesus saves. Your faith is not what saves. It's Jesus. And he is the one that you put your hope in.

The emphasis here is on the initiative of God -- of God choosing, of God electing, of God holding secure. Now, those ideas will become clearer as the teaching progresses. If you want to hear more about election, and what it means, and God's choice of us, it gets clearer as the passage goes forward. I will wait till then to dig in more, because I want to just keep to the point right here that Jesus is setting us up with the application on the front end here. He alone satisfies, and you are completely secure in him because the Father gives you to him, and he will not lose you.

We think of verses like Hebrew 7:25 and Hebrews 12:2: "...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith..." There is this work where we say, "Yeah, I'm trusting in Christ, but Christ is at work in me. He is the author of my faith. He is the founder. He is the initiator. And he will bring to completion that which he has started in me." It's a wonderful promise of sanctification, that if you belong to Jesus Christ, he is going to conform you into his image. It's brilliant. It's wonderful. I love that picture.

I have shared this with you before, and I will share it again. We are going to get to heaven. We are going to look back on our lives -- maybe there's going to be a movie. I don't know what the trailer to your life will look like. You might hope that the trailer is kinder than the real show, the reality TV. And there you will be, you know, going through all the discipline of God, all the phases of God, and now you will see so clearly God's purpose in everything. Then you might see yourself there, whining and crying and complaining the whole time. Right? There you are, just, "Okay!"

I remember when I turned 40, some 40 years ago, my wife had planned a surprise birthday party for me. I was clueless. She was getting in the car, saying, "Go here," and I am complaining the whole time. "Why are we going there? This doesn't make sense. Why are we driving this way?" I know you find this hard to believe, but it just got more foul as we went along. Finally, she probably said something like, "Just please be quiet and drive," beginning to regret the whole thing, probably. That's the way it could be for us in heaven, right? All this that God is doing in our lives and we are just complaining! Maybe that's just me personally.

Jack Kent Cooke was the owner of the Washington Redskins. I grew up in the DC area for a season in my life and I was a Redskins fan. His life was amazing. He bought the Redskins for practically nothing. He began as a door to door salesman, and when he died his will was published in the Washington Post there in the DC area. It was troubling because (I didn't know how this was done) it would have a name (like a first wife or a person that was close to him at one time who was now

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estranged) and beside that person's name there would be this single word: Disinherited. Here was this man with millions and millions of dollars, and there was this chronicle, the history of people who had fallen out of favor in his life, those that he had disinherited from his family fortune.

Jesus will never disinherit you. You are secure. When Jack Kent Cooke died, his son was managing the team. I'm sure he anticipated that he would receive the Redskins, but he did not leave the Redskins to his son. He gave them to a foundation. You will inherit God's very best and you will experience it in this life by his Spirit by trusting in Jesus. The Sufficiency of Jesus - that's our theme.

Let's pray.