

(John) 09 - Bread From Heaven

by Alan Redpath

Jesus teaches that He is the bread of life, and that people must labor for heavenly food, which cannot be earned by working, but is given by God's sovereignty.

Duration: 50:39

Scripture: Matthew 4:4, John 6:17-35

Topics: "John"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the universal spiritual hunger that exists in society. He emphasizes that Jesus is the bread of life and the water of life, and that He has come down from heaven to satisfy this hunger. The preacher encourages the audience to take notes and meditate on the message, as there is deep meaning in the text. He also mentions an interruption in the sermon, where the disciples encounter a storm at sea, highlighting the fact that being a Christian does not guarantee a smooth journey, but promises a safe landing.

Transcript

Lord, for answering prayer, and we trust you, do it again, and meet with each one of us tonight. As you know, we need that the Holy Spirit take of the things of Jesus and reveal them to us. For your name's sake, Amen.

Now open your Bibles, perhaps they're already open, at John chapter 6, John chapter 6 we dealt with the illustration, verses 1 through 15, and we read from verse 16, it's a long chapter, try and follow it carefully, 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 rose, because a strong wind was blowing.

When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near to the boat, they were frightened. But he said to them, it is I, do not be afraid. Then they were glad to take him into the boat, immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

On the next day, the people who 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. However, boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate the bread, after the Lord had given thanks. So when the people 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 seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him has God the Father 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, my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven. And as we read this chapter, note how often that phrase occurs, and if you can, underline it, ring it round in your Bible. The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

They said to him, Lord, give us this bread always. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who 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 him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do mine 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 at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which 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 murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. As it is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught by God.

And everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except him who is from God. He has seen the Father.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who 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 which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

And the bread which I shall 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? 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. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.

This is the bread which came down from heaven. Not such as the fathers ate and died, for he who eats this bread will live forever. This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured it, said to them, Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending where he was before? It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that should betray him. And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.

After this many of his disciples drew back, and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, Will you also go away? Now 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.

Jesus answered them, Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you, the devil? He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. For he, one of the twelve, was to betray him. This is the word of the Lord.

And it's a tremendous passage, this. This is really the meat of the Gospel of John here. We dealt, I think, completely with the feeding of the five thousand this morning.

I think we covered all of that. Just remember that they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of food, twelve garbage cans left over. Certainly there was more at the end of the meal than there was at the beginning.

And just a lesson again to remind ourselves, I need to learn to sit down when Jesus says so, and open my mouth wide that he may fill it. I need to sit down when he says so, and open my mouth wide that he may fill it. That multitude, remember this, could never have been fed if the bread in the hands of Jesus had not been broken.

When do you think five loaves and two fish were multiplied? At what moment? Do you think that became enough to feed five thousand? I suggest to you that it was being broken, given to the disciples, that it was multiplied, and then given. When it was broken, it was multiplied. Unbroken Christians are un-given Christians.

I'd like to think that through. Unbroken Christians are un-given. This is his unchanging plan for reaching the crowd.

He has no other plan. Give you them to eat. What a privilege to be given to people out of the hand of Jesus.

What a privilege to be given to people out of the hand of Jesus. Broken. And the wonder of the crowd grew, verse 14, and they began to see the significance, the prophetic significance, of his miracle, verse 15, and you might jot down on your Bible, for preference, or in your notebook, Deuteronomy 18, verse 15,

don't trouble to look it up now, Deuteronomy 18, verse 15, put that at the end of verse 14.

This is indeed the prophet, who is to come into the world. Now of course, the subject of this whole chapter is Christ, the bread of life. The miracle that we've just studied is the illustration of that.

Then the next two verses I've called an interruption, verses 15 through 25, and then the rest of the chapter, an interpretation of the illustration. I wish I had more time, but I haven't, and I can only treat this second portion as an interruption. This incident, which I think probably is familiar to you, of the storm at sea, and the disciples are sent forward and run into a storm.

Christ never promises us a smooth passage, but he does promise a safe landing. Never a smooth passage, but always a safe landing. Becoming a Christian doesn't guarantee a smooth sea.

They are warned of storms. But notice just three things, three thoughts, in this interruption, which maybe you could develop, and as they get into your hearts and grip it, you might find yourself with something to say to somebody else on this little passage. Verse 17, you could take this down if you would, I'll just go quite slowly.

The Lord sometimes allows his people to get into difficulties, but he knows our problems and won't leave us alone in danger. I'll repeat that. Sometimes the Lord allows his followers to get into difficulties, but he knows our problems and won't leave us alone in danger.

That's verse 17. Verse 19, when he comes to our rescue, we don't realize what's happening, and we get frightened. When Jesus comes to our rescue, we don't quite realize what's happening, and we get frightened.

And verse 20, at that moment, he makes no promise about the future, but he assures us of his presence, right now. He doesn't make any promise about the future, but he assures us of his presence today. Do I need to ask for any more than that? Verse 21, when Jesus is in control, things begin to happen.

Now you look into that portion with those thoughts in mind and develop them. Shall I repeat? Right, here it is, coming. Verse 17, the Lord sometimes allows his people to get into difficulties, but he knows our problems and won't leave them alone in danger.

Verse 19, when he comes to our rescue, we don't realize what's happening, and we get frightened, pressing the panic button. Verse 20, he makes, at that moment, no promise about the future, but he assures us of his presence right now. And I don't need to ask for more.

And verse 21, with Jesus in control, things begin to happen. It'll take you time just to look that through, then leave that thought with you. Now let's get to the interpretation.

As I said, here's the meat. There's some strong meat here of John's Gospel. And here's the need for me to remind you not to panic, and not to expect to understand it all in five minutes.

I've been reading it for about forty-five years, and there's still some things I don't understand, as we'll see in a moment. But don't get into a panic when you can't understand it, just get it down. All I want is to give you the opportunity to get it down in your notes, most of it down into your mind, and eighteen inches lower to your heart, and then just feed on it like a cow chews the curd, you know, just chewing, meditating, and let it come alive.

So, I'm going to go fairly slowly, I'm terribly sorry to tell you this, but you're going to have about half an hour of hard writing. Hard writing. So, ready? Sorry about this.

But you can't avoid it, it's the meat. It's really very wonderful, but it'll take you some time to understand it all. Now, I'll stop and tell you when you should be getting word for word, otherwise just get the gist.

The healing of the impotent man in chapter five led to his preaching about his authority and who he was. The feeding of the five thousand leads to tremendous teaching on Christ, the bread of life. Again, repeat.

Chapter five led to, the miracle of chapter five, the healing of the impotent man, led to his teaching on who he was and his authority. Now, the feeding of the five thousand leads to his teaching on the bread of life. And incidentally, you'll find that again and again in this gospel.

In chapter nine, for instance, where we get the story of the blind man who received his sight, that led to Christ teaching as the light of the world. And you'll see similarities like that in this gospel all the way through. Now, the message of the Lord, this is important, is in two parts.

Again, verse twenty-six to forty, he's speaking to the crowd. Verse twenty-six to forty, to the crowd. Verse forty-one to fifty-nine, he's speaking to the Jews.

Verses sixty to seventy-one, we see the outcome. Got those three things? Right? All clear? Thank you very much. Very good.

Now, verses twenty-six to twenty-seven, just look at those a moment. Truly, I say to you, you seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of loaves. Don't labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

For in him has God the Father set his seal. Incidentally, those two verses expound Matthew, chapter four, verse four. When Jesus was in the wilderness with the devil, and hungry and starving, Satan said to him, if you're the Son of God, turn these stones into bread.

His answer? Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And verses twenty-six and twenty-seven here really tell us about that. Just that's incidental.

But what do you make of the paradox? You know what that means? It's saying something from a different point of view. Paradox. In verse twenty-seven, people are told, you notice, that they should not labour for perishable food, which is the very thing they must do, by working, and that they should labour for heavenly food, which you can't earn by working.

Strange. Strange statement. Here it is, though.

Don't labour for perishable food. That's the very thing we have to do. And you must labour for heavenly food.

And we can't get it by labouring. Interesting. Think it through.

The answer, now here we're going slowly, and if I'm too fast, shout at me. Because, ooh, this is meat, and it's great stuff. It's the word of God.

And there'll be some questions on this. Just warning you. Now, every time the answer to verse twenty-eight, the answer to verse twenty-eight, what must we do to be doing the works of God, has been, all through history, verse twenty-nine.

This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. But, when that point is reached, people try to escape it, won't face it. And they do so by suggesting there isn't enough evidence.

Verse thirty. Repeat. Okay.

From the beginning. Right, back we go. Bottom gear, start again.

People are told here, don't labour for the perishable food, that's the very thing we have to do, but we must labour for heavenly food, which is not earned by working. Got it? The answer, every time in history, to verse twenty-eight, has been, verse twenty-nine. But, people try to escape that, and suggest there's not enough evidence.

What sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? What about the meal they just had? How much evidence do people demand to find Jesus trustworthy? How much evidence do people demand to find Jesus trustworthy? It's piled heaven high. What we need, are eyes to see it, and a heart to want it. Pray for that.

So far with me? Verse thirty-four, the people were hungry. Everybody is. The whole undertone of society tells of universal spiritual hunger.

But as we read in Luke chapter fifteen, there's bread enough and to spare in the Father's house. Luke fifteen, the story of the prodigal. Not in the far country, but in the Father's house.

And the great truth of this part of Jesus' message is, that he's the bread of life and the water of life. That's verse thirty-five. You should have a ring round, come down from heaven.

It appears eight times. Verse thirty-three, give me the opportunity to ring it or mark it or underline it or what have you. Verse thirty-three, verse thirty-eight, verse forty-one, verse forty-two, verse fifty, verse fifty-one, verse fifty-eight.

Seven times, sorry. Verse thirty-eight. Got that? Got those marked? Go again? Here we are.

Come again. Verse thirty-three, verse thirty-eight, verse forty-one, verse forty-two, verse fifty, verse fifty-one, and verse fifty-eight. There's nothing so wonderful as simplicity.

Nothing so profound. The bread of life, come down from heaven. Everyone understands the meaning of bread and water.

But the Jew murmured, verse forty-one, and here's the second portion of Jesus' message. The Jew murmured, can you understand it? Verse forty-one, the Jew murmured and said at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. They said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How did he now say, I have come down from heaven? They thought they'd got Jesus taped.

Verse forty-two. Luke one, chapter, verse thirty-one to thirty-five, puts the record straight. Luke one, verse thirty-one to thirty-five, puts the record straight.

There are many things that are strange and mysterious about discovering the will of God. But nothing should ever allow us to obscure what is absolutely plain and absolutely certain. Put this down, but don't take ten minutes to think it through.

Go back to your room and take your Bible and think it through. Listen, we don't know Jesus by knowing God, we know God by knowing Jesus. Verse forty-four and forty-five.

Jesus speaks of the manna in the wilderness. Verse forty-nine, your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven that a man may eat of it and not die.

The manna in the wilderness, a symbol of which Christ is the reality. Trouble is that people stumble at the way God has revealed himself, as the Jews did. Verse forty-two.

He reveals himself in ways that are familiar in the incarnation, the coming, the birth of our Lord. Together with the purpose of it, is the key to history. The birth of our Lord, the purpose of it, is the key to history.

And you notice, here's something. Oh, here's something that really makes your hair stand on end, if you have it. Only those who are drawn and enlightened by the Father will ever come to him.

Verse forty-four. And that enlightenment comes from the action of God. Verse forty-five.

Now repeat that. Only those who are drawn and enlightened by the Father will come to him. Verse forty-four.

And that enlightenment comes from the action of God. Verse forty-five. Do you believe in the absolute sovereignty of God? Yes.

Do you believe in the absolute necessity of human response and responsibility? Yes. Can you explain the two? No. Can you reconcile them, put them together? No.

Nobody ever has. All I can say about that is, if I could understand God, he'd be too small for me to worship him. There's a point where my understanding breaks down.

You see, Spurgeon put it in a lovely way. He was a preacher in this country about three generations ago as well. When we get up towards heaven, we see written on the gate outside, whosoever will may come.

We go through the gate, and we look back, and written on the inside, chosen in him from the foundation of the world. Both of those things are equally true. But you can't explain them.

Unfortunately, some people think they can. Now, you have colossal divisions in the church because of that. I'm so glad that my salvation does not depend upon my decision for Christ.

With every respect to Billy Graham, whom I love, is not really a scriptural term. Your salvation does not depend upon some decision you made. Ultimately, it depends upon you being chosen in Jesus from the foundation of the world.

Human responsibility, divine sovereignty, they're both taught. But it's also taught that God is not willing that one should perish. And he wants all to repent.

I leave that with you. Come back at me sometime. Come back at me.

Come down to WBC and chat with me about it. I won't be able to explain it to you, but I'd like to share with you. OK? Verse 47 and 48, Jesus renews his claim to be the bread of life and says that to believe in him is to possess life.

Verse 47, 48. The idea is, you see, that as you study this on your own, you have these references and these notes concern them. Jesus renews his claim to be the bread of life and declares that to believe in him is to possess life.

And you notice in verse 49, he contrasts the manna that had been given in the wilderness with the bread that he could give. The manna could not prevent death, but whoever eats the bread of life that he gives shall never die. Verse 51.

I'll just repeat that. He contrasts the manna that had been given in the wilderness with the bread that he could give. Verse 49.

The manna couldn't stop death, but whoever eats the bread of life shall never die. Verse 51. And you see, Jesus identifies, he identifies this spiritual bread which he gives with the giving of his flesh, which is for the life of the world.

Imparting to us the divine nature is to be our real food. Imparting to us the divine nature is to be our real food. You've got a physical nature when you are born, and you've got the nature of God when you're born again.

A spiritual nature. And the imparting of that divine nature is to be our food. Verse 52.

The Jews are absolutely incredulous and argue with one another. And so Jesus gives them another shock in the statement of verse 53. 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.

He who eats my flesh, drinks my blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Now, don't get that wrong. Let's get it right.

Here it comes. Jesus' claim to give his flesh for the life of the world has a sacrificial significance. Two long words.

S-A-C-R-I-F-I-C-I-A-L. A sacrificial significance. S-I-G-N-I-F-I-C-A-N-C-E, I think.

Yes, certainly. His claim to give his flesh for the life of the world has a sacrificial significance. And, of course, the language is pictured at the Lord's Supper.

So there we have a symbol and a picture of eating his body and drinking his blood. But the most important idea is the redemptive character, the redemptive character of the death of Christ. And the spiritual benefits which result from the value of his death.

Verse 54. Careful here. Ready.

Waiting. Right. Jesus is saying here that receiving the value of his death and resurrection, his life and death, if you like, results in the immediate possession of eternal life.

So let us say again. Jesus says that receiving the value of his life and death results in the immediate possession of eternal life. And the certainty of spiritual, of future resurrection.

Verse 54 and 55. Here he is in verse 55. My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

That's the real nourishment of our heart. And you notice the result of that? An intimate union with our Lord. Verse 56.

He who eats my blood, my flesh, and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. That's the same union which existed between God the Father and God the Son. Verse 57.

As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father. So he who eats me will live because of me. Got it? Repeat again.

Just let me, it's tremendously important you get this down and think it through. Think it through. And I'm expecting a whole horde of you down at WBC to think it through together.

Just a little group of us. Think it through. Because this life, the meat and everything here, this is, oh it's strong meat.

But I hope it's digestible. Let me give it again. That's it, thank you.

Ready? I started by saying the Jews are incredulous and argue with one another. That's verse 52. And then Jesus shakes them to the core by this statement of verse 53.

Which I read to you. His claim to give his flesh for the life of the world has sacrificial significance. The language of course is pictured at the Lord's Supper.

There we have a symbol in picture form. This picture of eating his body and drinking his blood. But the first and foremost idea is the redemptive nature of the death of Jesus.

And the benefits which result from receiving the spiritual value of his death. Verse 54. And Jesus says here that receiving the values of his life and death result in immediate possession of eternal life.

Receiving the values of his life and death result in immediate possession of eternal and the certainty of future resurrection. Verse 55. My flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed.

His flesh and blood are the real nourishment of our heart. Because a close and wonderful union results from receiving his nature. And that's the same kind of union as he had with his father.

Just as he abided in his father so we abide in him. Verse 57. Notice in verse 60 when the disciples seem to object to this idea.

Jesus replied in verse 62 and 63. Many of his disciples when they heard it said this is a hard saying who can listen to it. And Jesus replied in verse 62 and 63.

Then what if you were to see the son of man ascending where he was before. It is a spirit that gives life. The flesh is of no avail.

The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Just let me give you in a sentence what he's saying there. The fact of his ascension to his father will remove any idea of materially feeding on his flesh and

blood.

And this shows that it's a spiritual work, a spiritual merit that's intended. Repeating the fact that Jesus has ascended into heaven. Removes any idea of materially feeding on his flesh and blood.

And shows that it's a spiritual sharing in the benefits of that. It's intended. His words are spirit and life.

The flesh can never evolve into the spirit. Spiritual life comes by receiving the Holy Spirit. Yes.

You've been very good. It's 7.25. Relax. Billy is coming.

Let's pray. Father we've been thinking of and talking about some things that are hard to understand. But we thank you that it's the work of the Holy Spirit to make them come alive in our hearts.

And as we pray and study, may the Spirit throw light into our hearts. Upon which something which at the moment seems a blank. And now and then it'll become life and mean everything to us.

Lord, we'll shut up to a miracle every day for anything worthwhile. Lectures can't do it, but you can. Thank you.

Amen. Amen.

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