



The Gospel of John

Session Twelve: The Bread of Life

THE LESSON AT A GLANCE

In today's discourse, Jesus shared the first of seven "I am" statements in the book of John: "I am the Bread of life" (John 6:35). You might recall that John's Gospel is organized thematically, not necessarily chronologically, and is roughly divided into two sections: Jesus's public and private ministry, and the events leading up to the cross. Throughout these sections, you'll encounter these "I am" statements, and you'll notice how the narrative in John's Gospel reveals who Christ is.

Each "I am" statement is followed by a promise. Today's promise? "*Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty*" (John 6:35).

Highlight these statements and promises as you encounter them and seek to commit them to memory.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURES

John 6:22-59

THE MAIN IDEA

Jesus declared Himself the Bread of Life and taught that He is the source of eternal sustenance. God will provide for our needs. We are to pursue growing faith as we trust in Him.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Is there an area of life where you are struggling to trust in God's providence? How might experiencing Jesus as the Bread of Life help you navigate a season of waiting?

SCRIPTURE IN CONTEXT

John 6:22-29 The morning after the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, the people followed Jesus across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum in search of more. They wanted to know what they can do to "earn" an eternal supply. Jesus responded by telling them there is only one requirement to inherit eternal life—to believe in the One God sent—Jesus.

John 6:30-40 In His first "I am" statement (of seven in the book of John) Jesus declared, "I am the Bread of Life." Unlike the manna from heaven that fed the Israelites, Jesus provides eternal supply to those who receive Him.

John 6:41-59 Jesus offered a foreshadowing of the cross and a promise. His body is real flesh and blood. It would be broken, like the Passover meal, to atone for the sins of humanity. When we come to Christ by faith, we receive His flesh and blood, broken on our behalf, and find eternal sustenance and security in Him.



START HERE

Diet fads come and go. In the 80s, many were banishing fat, in the 90s we were cutting calories at all costs, and today, bread is public enemy number one as we add more protein to our diets and try to eliminate carbs. In ancient times, bread was not a luxury reserved for “cheat days.” It was the very essence of life. Bread nourished and sustained, and breaking bread together created community. It’s no wonder that Jesus’ first “I am” statement was centered around bread. From the first Passover to the Last Supper, breaking bread demonstrates God providence for His people.

DISCUSS

What is something you feel like you need every day? What happens if you can’t get it for that day? What are the things we need from God every day? How do we seek those and receive them?

REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE TEXT

1. Believing in the Bread of Life

John 6:22-29: The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw there had been only one boat. They also saw that Jesus had not boarded the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone off alone. Some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

Jesus answered, “Truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him.”

“What can we do to perform the works of God?” they asked.

Jesus replied, “This is the work of God—that you believe in the one he has sent.”

Unpacking John 6:22-29

In first-century homes, bread wasn’t an optional part of the meal, it was the very essence of nourishment, and an important part of the family’s daily routine. Without modern means of preservation, grain was ground into flour daily, made into loaves, and baked in small clay ovens. Bread was the centerpiece of every meal, and a daily reminder of God’s providence. When Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life, He was saying He is the ultimate Provider and Sustainer.



Just like first-century families could not go a day without bread, we shouldn't go a day without Jesus.

In last week's passage (John 6:1-21), we looked at two important miracles—one public, another private, that established Jesus's power over natural forces. In the first, He fed a crowd of more than five thousand from nothing but two fish and five small loaves of bread. Afterward, He sent the disciples across the sea to Capernaum while He dismissed the crowd and spent some time alone in prayer. You might recall that in the early morning hours, after the disciples had battled the wind and waves all night, Jesus appeared to them, walking on the water, and immediately calmed the storm. From other texts (specifically Matthew 14:22-33), we see that this miracle solidified the disciple's faith, as Peter declared for them all, *"Truly you are the Son of God"* (Matthew 14:33).

The next day, the crowd from Bethsaida realized that though Jesus did not leave with the disciples, He was no longer on the side of the lake with them. Out of curiosity, or perhaps a desire for more free food, they board some passing boats from Tiberius and went across the sea to Capernaum. Upon finding Jesus, they asked, *"Rabbi, when did you get here?"* (v. 25) Notice the changing titles the crowd applied to Jesus. Earlier in chapter six they called Jesus a *"prophet"* (v. 14) and wanted to harness His power and make Him a *"king"* (v. 15). In these verses, they called Jesus by the title, *"Rabbi."* Though they addressed Jesus as a teacher, they still attempted to get Him to do what they wanted—perform miracles on demand or assume a political role that would somehow benefit them. Jesus was swift to call out their motivation.

"Truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled" (v. 26). Jesus knew their hearts—His miracles had not moved them to recognize Him as Messiah and draw near to God by faith. Rather, the loaves and fish had satisfied their temporary hunger, and after some time passed, they came looking for more. It is interesting to note that Jesus fed the crowd because they were on a mountain far from home and the evening approached—not because there wasn't food in their houses to eat. While crossing an eight-mile-wide lake in a rowboat doesn't seem easier than grinding grain and baking bread oneself, it illustrates the lengths people will go seeking for God to do something they want. We are willing to go to similar lengths today, even if only metaphorically.

In Exodus 16, God fed the Israelites bread from heaven the entire forty years they wandered in the wilderness. Each evening, God sent quail for them to eat, and each morning He provided bread that covered the ground like dew. They did not have to earn it, work for it, or pay for it. They had only to receive it by faith. In fact, on the sixth day God commanded they gather twice as much, because the seventh day would be a sabbath rest for God's people, and He would not send quail or grain. Those who believed God did as He instructed. Those who felt entitled to a perpetual supply went hungry on the seventh day. While the *"food"* may have been quail and manna, faith and trust were most important. They had to believe God would continue to provide for them. And He did.



Jesus reiterated His point, saying, *“Don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him”* (John 6:27). Jesus wanted their focus to be on eternal sustenance that He would provide, not on temporary nourishment that would always leave them wanting more.

Like the woman at the well who was offered living water by Jesus and replied, *“Give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and come here to draw water”* (John 4:15), this crowd similarly asked Jesus, *“What can we do to perform the works of God?”* (John 6:28) Perhaps like the Samaritan woman, they wanted to know how to secure an eternal supply of bread. What Jesus offered, of course, was not perpetual food, but His perpetual presence and provision. When we are in short supply—of financial resources, food, security, friendships, peace, or any other thing—we can begin to think, like the people, *“What can we do?”* We begin striving, pushing, demanding, and hustling, trying to grab security for ourselves and our families. As many know, however, this effort will always fail to fully satisfy.

A life built on our own strength is unstable. All our efforts may leave us worse than before. These people wanted to know what they could do to secure a future that God would bless. However, as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, a life constructed on anything but Christ and His Word is susceptible to the blowing winds of fear, scarcity, and uncertainty (Matthew 7:24-27).

“Jesus replied, “This is the work of God—that you believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:29). Believing is the work. While our work is generally recognized by others because of its results, the work God calls us to is turned inward toward a posture of faith to believe in God and trust Him to provide. Just as there was nothing the people could do to “make” Jesus give them more bread from heaven, there is nothing we can “do” to convince God to care for us. Caring for His children is part of His eternal nature.

When we believe God will meet our needs, and we come to Him in trust, our faith grows. As we see Him provide for our physical needs, we learn to trust Him to meet our deepest need—forgiveness and eternal life through Christ. Charles Spurgeon said, “Faith is believing that Christ is what he is said to be, that he will do what he has promised to do, and expecting this of him.” We can trust Him. Jesus didn’t want the people who encountered Him in Capernaum to miss that truth. God is a trustworthy Provider. Still, many times we settle for bread that perishes when we could have experienced the Bread of Heaven. He desires to grow our faith as we do the “work” of believing in Him.

DISCUSS

- *What did the crowd misunderstand about why Jesus had performed the miracle of feeding them?*
- *How does Jesus redefine what it means to “work for God”?*
- *How do we still chase “perishable bread” in our own lives—things that satisfy only for a moment?*



2. Receiving the Bread of Life

John 6:30-40: *“What sign, then, are you going to do so that we may see and believe you?” they asked. “What are you going to perform? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”*

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, Moses didn’t give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Then they said, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again. But as I told you, you’ve seen me, and yet you do not believe. Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who 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. This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Unpacking John 6:30-40

In many cultures, over time bread making moved from a household chore to one performed by bakeries. Now, most people receive their bread readymade—and even pre-sliced. However, the baker’s work begins long before the loaf reaches the table. Similarly, salvation isn’t something we “bake” for ourselves. Christ has done the work; we must receive it by faith.

Jesus told the crowd that He is the Bread of Life. The people demanded more proof before believing. They wanted a sign—perhaps another miracle of bread. But Jesus clarified that He is the true gift from heaven.

“What sign, then, are you going to do so that we may see and believe you?” they asked. “What are you going to perform? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat” (John 6:30-31). The crowd continued to question Jesus. They asked for a sign, referencing their ancestors who ate the manna in the desert.

It was not Moses who gave their ancestors manna. God is the provider and sustainer of life. James 1:17 remind us, *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”*



Moses petitioned God on behalf of the Hebrew people, and God provided for their needs (vv. 32-33). Moses asked—God did the miracle. Jesus is the better Moses. As Hebrews 3:5-6 says, *“Now Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s household... but Christ was faithful as a Son over his household.”* Moses was a servant. Jesus is the Son. In Christ, we do not come near to someone who can petition God on our behalf. We come to the Savior who is one with God and gives us access to His presence through His own sacrifice. The people didn’t need another Moses; they needed a Messiah.

“Then they said, ‘Sir, give us this bread always’ (v. 34). Like the woman at the well, the people likely had no idea what they were asking for. They wanted security—the promise that they and their families would be provided for. Jesus’s answer was likely not what they expected.

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again” (v. 35). This proclamation is Jesus’s first of seven *“I am”* statements found in the book of John. Jesus is our greatest need. However, He recognized that not all will accept Him as Savior and Lord. *“But as I told you, you’ve seen me, and yet you do not believe”* (v. 36). Even considering the miracle they had witnessed less than twenty-four hours before, the people still resisted doing the work God required—believing in His Son (v. 29).

“Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who 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. This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (vv. 37-40).

Take a moment to consider Jesus’s words. The Father entrusts us to Christ. We come to Him by faith, and Jesus receives us unconditionally. Securing our eternity is the reason Jesus came, and His plans for us extend beyond this lifetime—Jesus saves us today and will raise us from death to eternal life in Him. God gives, we come by faith, and Jesus receives, secures, and raises. Our salvation is safely secured from the heart of the Father to the provision of the Son and the sealing of the Spirit. Our call and responsibility is to believe in the work Christ has done on our behalf. As Ann Voskamp wrote in her book, *Loved to Life*, *“Jesus doesn’t just give bread; He is bread. He doesn’t just meet our need; He becomes our nourishment.”*

DISCUSS

- *What does it mean that Jesus “came down from heaven”? How is He better manna than the people received in the wilderness?*
- *How did Jesus correct the people’s misunderstanding of Moses’s role? Where might we be giving wrong credit for things God has done or is doing?*
- *What does “receiving” the Bread of Life look in your daily rhythms of prayer, worship, and dependence?*



3. Surrendering to the Bread of Life

John 6:41-59: *Therefore the Jews started grumbling about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They were saying, “Isn’t this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”*

*Jesus answered them, “Stop grumbling 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 listened to and learned from the Father comes to me—not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He has seen the Father.*

“Truly I tell you, anyone who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone 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. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

At that, the Jews argued among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

So Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. The one who 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; it is not like the manna your ancestors ate—and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever.”

He said these things while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Unpacking John 6:41-59

In ancient meals, bread was torn, not sliced, and shared among those dining. Bread was not only the center of the meal, but breaking bread together was a sign of relationship and trust. Jesus broke bread with His disciples on the night He was arrested as a picture of what He was about to do on the cross. To eat His flesh and drink His blood means full surrender—taking His life into ours, allowing His sacrifice to become our sustenance. This is not a casual meal; it’s covenant participation.

Notice how quickly the people moved from “*give us this bread always*” (v. 34) to “. . . *grumbling about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They were saying, “Isn’t this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”* (vv. 41-42). When coming to Jesus meant security and free



food, the people wanted it forever. When coming to Jesus meant surrender, they began to grumble.

In Matthew 5:3, Jesus said, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.”* We come to Christ out of our spiritual poverty—there is nothing we can do or say to earn His favor. When we acknowledge our own shortcomings, we encounter Christ’s abundant spiritual provision. Through Him, we will be raised on the last day and inherit eternal life (v. 40). The people wanted to experience Jesus’s physical blessings without receiving Him. They desired what Jesus could provide but resisted confessing Him as Lord—they desired their ration more than relationship.

In verses 47-51, Jesus said everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. When the Hebrews ate the bread in the desert, it satisfied their temporary hunger, but they still died. Hebrews 3:19 says, *“They were unable to enter because of unbelief.”* An entire generation wandered for forty years and died before entering the promised land because of their lack of faith. God provided Christ not as a temporary way to fill their physical hunger, but as an eternal way to fill their spiritual hunger. Jesus said if someone eats the bread He gives, they will not die. Then, Jesus ended this teaching with a provocative statement that the Jews argued over after—*“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh”* (v. 51).

“At that, the Jews argued among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

So Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. The one who 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; it is not like the manna your ancestors ate—and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever” (vv. 52-58).

Jesus’s claims were so shocking that the people argued even among themselves what He meant. How could He possibly give His own flesh as food?

In response, Jesus doubled down on His claim that His flesh is the food that will usher in eternal life with God. This time, He claimed that unless you *“eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves.”* If eating Jesus’s flesh sounded shocking, drinking His blood was even more so, as Jews were strictly prohibited from drinking blood. Leviticus 17:10-11 says, *“I will set my face against any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who eats blood, and I will cut them off from the people. For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life”* (NIV). Because blood atoned for the sins of the people, it was necessary for the forgiveness of sins. When blood was splashed upon the altar, God saw the sacrifice and forgave them. When Christ gave up His life on the cross, His own blood was



shed for the forgiveness of sins. When we “*eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood*” (John 6:53), we take within ourselves Christ’s sacrifice as sufficient for the forgiveness of our sins. No other debt remains. His shed blood was sufficient to pay the penalty for the sins of humanity.

Jesus finished this provocative statement by differentiating between He and Moses. When the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years, God fed them bread from heaven. It appeared every morning and sustained them during their journey. However, the day they first ate from the produce of the promised land, the manna stopped. It had served its purpose, and then the people were to rely on the land for food.

“While the Israelites camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month. The day after Passover they ate unleavened bread and roasted grain from the produce of the land. And the day after they ate from the produce of the land, the manna ceased. Since there was no more manna for the Israelites, they ate from the crops of the land of Canaan that year” (Joshua 5:10-12).

Jesus is the true Bread from Heaven and the ultimate Passover Lamb. We do not come to God for bread that will sustain us for a while but then stops. We do not come to a Passover that will forgive our sins temporarily but must be repeated each year. No, in Christ, we receive the true Bread of Life who declared, “*Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty*” (John 6:35). We receive the true Passover Lamb, who sacrificed Himself so we might have eternal life. “*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. 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*” (John 6:56-57). The crowd’s response was split—some walked away, unable to accept His words. But those who stayed would discover the meaning of true discipleship—abiding in the One who gives eternal life.

DISCUSS

- *Why did this teaching offend so many of Jesus’s followers?*
- *What does it mean to “eat” and “drink” Christ in a spiritual sense?*
- *What might it look like for you to fully surrender to Jesus as the Bread of Life—trusting Him as your source of strength and hope?*

DEEPER FOCUS

Write down John 6:35 on a notecard or piece of paper and carry it with you this week. Periodically take it out and allow it to prompt your prayers and praise. “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry.”



RESPOND TO THE TEXT

How has Jesus met your deepest hunger?

APPLY

What “perishable breads” compete for your attention? How can you grow your “taste” for the Bread of Life?

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