

John's Gospel - Eating & Drinking With Jesus

by John Vissers

Faith is not about earning salvation, but about believing in Jesus, who is the bread of life.

Duration: 38:56

Topics: "Gospel Of John"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the passage from John 6:25-59 where Jesus declares himself as the bread of life. The preacher highlights the universal human experience of food and how it is a necessity for survival. He emphasizes that while our world may have an abundance of food, there are still many who go hungry. The preacher challenges the audience to reflect on whether they have truly embraced Jesus as the bread of life and have found assurance and comfort in him.

Transcript

I invite you to turn to our scripture lesson for this evening, the gospel according to Saint John, as we return to our studies in John's gospel tonight. We're going to read a rather lengthy section tonight, chapter 6, starting at verse 25 through to the end of verse 59. John chapter 6, starting at verse 25.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, Rabbi, when did you get here? Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.

Then they asked him, what must we do to do the works God requires? Jesus answered, the work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent. So they asked him, what miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert. As it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who 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. Sir, they said, from now on give us this bread.

Then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

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. At this the Jews began to grumble about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They said, is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, I came down from heaven? Stop grumbling among yourselves, Jesus answered.

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.

No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God. Only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.

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 his flesh to eat? 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.

Our forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever. He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. Amen.

May God bless to us this reading from his word tonight. Let's bow in prayer, shall we? Lord, we thank you tonight for your word. We thank you for the Lord Jesus, who is the bread of life.

Feed us, we pray this evening, in the things of Christ, for we pray in his name. Amen. When I was in high school, I had a small part in our school's production of the Broadway play, Oliver.

The production, for those of you who know it, is based on Charles Dickens' novel, Oliver Twist, which describes the adventures of a poor orphan boy. And the book, when it first was published in the 19th century, was noted for its sensational presentation of London's criminal world and for its attack on England's mistreatment of the poor at the time. Oliver is a young boy who, if you know the story, lives in an orphanage, really a workhouse for children, and there never seems to be just enough to eat.

They eat this awful stuff, if you've seen the movie or you've seen the play, they eat this awful stuff called gruel. And in fact, they sing this song about the gruel that they have to eat and have to endure in this

workhouse. But on another occasion, they sing a wonderful song about food, food, glorious food.

And in fact, it's one of my favorite parts in the play, and the song describes all the wonderful foods that the children wished they could eat. And it goes something like this, food, glorious food, hot sausage and mustard, when you're in the mood, hot pudding and custard, peas pudding and savoy, what next is the question, rich gentlemen get it boys, indigestion. Well, lest I get carried away, let me stop there.

But one of the reasons I think that we can enjoy a song like that, and in fact, enjoy, I enjoy that song in the play, is because we all identify with food. Food is one of those things that's universal, it's a universal human experience, we must all eat to live. And as you know, every culture has its own food, every culture has its own way of preparing that food.

If you've traveled in different parts of the world, you'll experience some of the different foods that you can eat, and some of the different ways in which those foods are in fact prepared. Every family has its own favorite meals and has its own particular rituals around eating and drinking together. We live in a city of food, from fast food Wendy's to Eastside Mario's to Kensington Kitchen around the corner and to some very exclusive fine dining restaurants all over the city.

And of course we live in a world as well where many people don't have very much food to eat, where they share a little bit of bread and perhaps go to bed hungry in places like the Sudan or in India or in other parts of our world tonight. And in our world, in our culture of abundance on the one hand, and abundance of food, and in our world of want where there is also a want of food, the word of God, it seems to me, comes to us tonight. And in John 6 and particularly verse 35, Jesus says, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. And Jesus dares to say to us, and in fact all people, that there is more to life than the daily bread that feeds us. And he identifies with this human experience, this universal human experience, that all people need bread to live.

But he says there's something more that is also necessary to life. And so that's really what this passage is about. Now Jesus says this according to verse 59, the very last verse that we read.

He says this while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. Now Capernaum is up in the north. It's up in Galilee.

And earlier in chapter 6, and we looked at this passage quite some time ago now in May, but earlier in chapter 6 you'll remember Jesus had fed the 5,000. And what's going on now is it's the next day, and the next day the crowd has gone looking for Jesus. The same crowd that he fed, many of the same people, they go looking for Jesus.

And once they realized that Jesus was no longer to be found on the east shore, on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, they headed across the lake to look for him. And they go to Capernaum and presumably there they find him teaching in the synagogue. So what we've just read, this conversation takes place in the synagogue in Capernaum.

And what follows then is really a lengthy conversation between Jesus, between the crowd, the people who came to find him, who came to look for him, who wanted to see him again, and to talk to him, and also the religious leaders. And even though the people had eaten the bread that Jesus provided the day before, they hadn't really understood what had happened. They really hadn't understood what Jesus had done.

They really hadn't fully understood what Jesus was about. The miracle had been a sign for people that Jesus was the Messiah, that Jesus was the one sent from God, that Jesus was the one who had come, in fact, to provide redemption and salvation for his people. But in fact, the people saw Jesus as their meal ticket.

And so the whole point of this passage is to explain the meaning, really, of what had happened, what had taken place the day before in the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus wants the people to understand that he doesn't just give bread for the belly, but that he is indeed the very bread of life, that the bread that they experience day by day will only mean that they'll be hungry again, that even the bread their forefathers had, the man in the wilderness, was not enough, that they needed more, and that he is the bread of life, and whoever eats and drinks what he gives has eternal life. Now, this is a long passage, and it's rather complicated in some ways, and we're not going to be able to do it justice tonight in every detail, but what I want us to look at as we, or what I want us to see, rather, as we look at this passage together is some of the main line of the argument, some of the main points that Jesus is making when he speaks to these people, and I want us to think a little bit together about how what Jesus says to them about faith, about what it means to believe in him, about what it means to understand that he is the bread of life, what that means to us in our world, how it resonates with our experience with our lives.

So let's look then in this passage, and I want to take the first chunk from verses 25 to 33, and I want us to notice as we think into this passage together that, first of all, Jesus speaks to the people about the meaning of faith. The first part of this conversation has to do with what faith is all about. It has to do with the meaning of faith.

When the people first find Jesus, they want to know how he got to Capernaum. They want to know why he had disappeared from the other side of the shores of the lake in Galilee, and how he got to the other side, and when he got there, when he got to Capernaum. And Jesus' reply, you'll notice, is really rather curt.

He says, you're looking for me because you ate the loaves and had your fill, not because you really understand who I am. Jesus tells them that they should invest their time and their energy in finding out more about food that endures to eternal life, and food that Jesus can give them. And their next question, then, you'll notice, is really very revealing because they ask, what must we do to do the works God requires? In other words, what can we do to earn this thing that you're talking about, this bread that you're talking about, this food that you're talking about? What do we have to do? How can we do what is necessary to make sure that we get this bread, this food about which you are speaking? And Jesus responds, you'll notice, with these powerful words, the work of God is this, to believe in the one he sent.

The only way to obtain this food is to believe in Jesus, who is the bread of life. And so Jesus is speaking to them very directly about faith. But of course, then the question emerges, why should they believe Jesus? So they ask for a miraculous sign.

Some of them already suspected that Jesus might be the prophet, that he might be the one who was to come into the world. Now, many of the Jewish people believed that Moses would return again, or perhaps Elijah, but particularly Moses, that Moses would return at the end. Moses was the prophet of Israel.

And some of them wondered if Jesus could be the prophet who was going to return now like Moses at the end of the world. After all, Moses had provided an entire nation with bread from heaven for 40 years out in the wilderness. And you'll notice the people cite Psalm 78 verse 24 to support their request for a sign.

They say he gave them bread from heaven to eat. But then you'll notice what happens is Jesus, as he often does, he turns that quotation back over against them and explains what it really means. He says it wasn't Moses who fed them in the wilderness, it was God.

It wasn't Moses who gave them bread from heaven, it was God. And now God is giving them the true bread from heaven. This is the bread which gives life to the world, and Jesus is that bread.

And those who want to eat this bread must believe in him. It must be received by faith. Now I want you to think for a moment because I want to suggest to you tonight that in fact this encounter, this conversation, uncovers three very important misconceptions about what faith is really all about.

About what constitutes real faith, about what believing is all about. Let me just run through these three misconceptions with you very briefly. The first is that the people first of all came to Jesus and wanted to kind of believe in Jesus for what he could do for them.

They needed more bread. He could feed thousands with a few loaves. They needed something to drink.

Jesus could turn water into wine, as the story had spread from John chapter two. They had physical needs. Jesus could heal people.

Jesus could walk on water. They had felt needs, but Jesus challenges them, you want me because you had your fill, not because I am the Son of God, the Messiah. And there's a sense in which this uncovers how faith sometimes can really be very self-centered and very much driven by our own felt needs and very narcissistic.

There are many reasons why we might find Jesus attractive. We have many felt needs that might drive us to Jesus, but we need to understand that faith is more than having our fill. Too many of us in our world today are consumers of religion or consumer Christians looking for Jesus to meet our needs, looking for the best spiritual deal in town, whether those are emotional needs or physical needs or needs for health and wealth and prosperity, rather than the real need that Jesus meets, our need for forgiveness, our need for hope in the face of death, our need for the forgiveness of our sin and for the salvation which he offers for the food that endures to eternal life.

And so this encounter in a very real sense unmask and uncovers a very prevalent understanding of faith and of what religion is about in our culture and in our world today. What is the most important thing in life? What is it that really matters? What is it that's really at the heart of who we are? What are the real needs that we have that need to be met? Or are we satisfied just with a kind of Jesus who can meet our felt needs? Jesus says that's not really what faith is about. You need to understand who I am.

And then the second misconception that he kind of unmask here and uncovers is that the people then go on and they assume, when they begin to understand this a little bit, they begin to assume now that there's something that they have to do to earn this. There's something they have to do to get this. They have to do something to earn the food that Jesus speaks about.

Verse 28, what must we do to do the works that God requires? If there's something more Jesus to this faith about which you're speaking to, about who you are, about your identity, then how do we get this? How do we in fact get this about which you are speaking? It must be that we have to do something to earn it. We have to do something to make God love us. We have to do something to get this thing that you're talking about.

And Jesus simply says, the work of God is this, to believe in the one that he has sent. The work of God is this, to believe in the one that he has sent. You see, faith, when all is said and when all is done, faith is nothing more and nothing less than simply reaching out with empty hands and embracing Jesus Christ who is the bread of life.

It is not something we do to earn our salvation. We don't bargain with God, as it were. We simply grasp the bread of life in our hands, which came down from heaven, Jesus Christ, and trust in him alone for our salvation.

And again, this pushes us in a direction that makes us feel uncomfortable, because there's nothing more than we'd like to think or do, than to think that we can save ourselves, that there's something that we can do to justify ourselves before God. And Jesus says, the work is simply this, to embrace the one who is the bread of life. And then there's a third aspect, a third misconception here, because the people then wanted proof that they could understand, that would demonstrate that, in fact, what Jesus was saying was true.

The people wanted proof consistent with their tradition. Could Jesus perform a miracle like Moses did in the wilderness? But Jesus says it is God who is at work, not Moses. God who gives true bread, not Moses.

They should be looking for the work of God. They should be looking for God at work in their midst, not simply confined by their own traditions and their own preconceptions. And Jesus is saying to them, the bread that Moses gave didn't, in the end, last forever.

And so you need bread that will give you eternal life. If Jesus, they say, would only do something to demonstrate this, then, in fact, we would believe him. And Jesus says it's the work of God.

And don't we also think that way? If Jesus would only do something to meet my need and do something in a way that makes sense to me, that resonates with my experience, that fits into my worldview, that is consistent with my tradition, that is consistent with my upbringing, that is consistent with all that I am, my pre-understandings. If Jesus would just do something that would fit into all of that, that would make sense to me, then I will trust in him. And Jesus simply says, sorry folks, I am the bread of life.

This is all there is. I am who I am, and you either trust me or you don't trust me. I am the bread who comes down from heaven.

And if you can't accept me as I am, the Son of God, the Messiah, then nothing I say or do is going to change that. And so the first question really that I want to ask you tonight is, what kind of faith do you have? Is it a faith that's demanding of Jesus, a kind of a proof? Is it some of the other kinds of faith that we've looked at? Is it being driven by your own felt needs? Is it faith driven by your desire to do something for yourself, to justify yourself? Or is it the kind of faith that Jesus points to in this passage, simply to believe in the one whom God has sent? But then secondly, notice that Jesus goes on, and the second chunk I want to look at very briefly is in verses 34 to 51. In verses 34 to 51, where Jesus speaks with the people now, and he moves on here from speaking about faith to speaking about assurance.

The people respond to all this by saying, from now on, give us this bread. Jesus says, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jesus says, I am not the bread giver, but I am the bread itself. The bread is in your midst. The bread has already come down from heaven.

If you come to me, you'll understand this, because you'll never go hungry again. If you believe in me, you'll never be thirsty. You're looking for something you already have in your midst.

The promise has already been fulfilled. But then I want you to notice that Jesus presses the point a little bit further, and he says, God is at work in the midst of all of this, even though many who see Jesus will not believe. The Father is giving many to Jesus, and those who come will never be driven away.

Those who trust in Jesus for who he is, who see him for what he is, for who he is, the one sent from God, they will be kept until the last day. And Jesus says, those who look to me and believe in me shall live forever. I will raise them up on the last day.

And this is the assurance. God is at work in the life and in the ministry of Jesus. But the Jewish leaders, you'll notice, and when John refers to the Jews in his gospel, he's really talking about the Jewish leaders.

The Jewish leaders objected to this, but Jesus persists further. He has been sent from God. The sovereign God is at work here, and only those drawn by the Father will come to Jesus.

He is the one sent from heaven. Jesus will give his life for the world. Now, I want to pause here, because what you've got here in a very real and in a very profound sense is the very heart of the gospel being uncovered here in the heart of the gospel of John.

The sovereign God has come into the world in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. And Jesus gave his life for the world, and what he's saying is you shouldn't expect any other sign. You shouldn't expect any other miracle.

You shouldn't expect any other revelation, because this is the work of God. And then he pushes it further, and he says the sovereignty of God, the gracious work of God, extends further to those who respond. Now, these are difficult words in a world where we value the freedom of the will, but listen to what Jesus says.

He says, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and I shall lose none of all that he has given me. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. Now, all of this is to say simply this basic but this very important thing.

It's God who is at work saving people in the life and ministry of Jesus, and it's God who draws men and women to himself. The Bible says that we are dead in our trespasses and our sins, but God in his grace makes us alive in Jesus Christ. It doesn't depend on our knowledge.

It doesn't depend on our ability. It doesn't depend on some kind of rational proof that we put together. It doesn't depend on our experience.

It doesn't depend on our good works. It doesn't depend on our feelings. It depends only and solely and finally and ultimately on the grace of God, on the sovereign grace of God at work in your life.

And if you trust in yourself for your salvation, you will always lack the assurance that truly belongs to those who belong to the Lord. But if you trust in the Lord, if you trust in the Lord as the sovereign one who has drawn you to himself, then in fact you will find that assurance that Christ and Christ alone is the object of our faith and he is the one who fulfills our deepest hopes and our deepest needs. So beyond faith, the question I want to ask you tonight is this.

What kind of assurance do you have? What kind of assurance do you have that you belong to Jesus Christ and to him alone? Is that assurance based on how you feel or on something that you think you need to do? Or is it based on the fact that the Lord has drawn you to himself? Because that in the end is where true assurance belongs. I was raised in a very strict Calvinist tradition, and some Calvinist traditions, rather than having a strong emphasis on assurance, have a strong emphasis on a lack of assurance. And I've had long conversations with my dear 93, almost 94-year-old grandmother on assurance of faith, and she believes that somehow to speak this way, to say that you can be assured that you belong to the Lord, is presumptuous.

And there is a presumption to it, if you're not careful, but what we need to understand is that any presumption that is there is presumption that's rooted in the sovereignty of God, and in the grace of God, and in the work of Jesus. Not in anything that we've done, not in anything that we are, not in who we are. And that is the assurance of faith, that Christ and Christ alone is our Savior, that God is at work in the ministry of Jesus, drawing us to him so that we might be saved, and that we might be drawn into the family of God.

It's one of the great gospel truths of the Bible. Those who trust in Christ alone for their salvation have this assurance, Jesus will never drive you away. You have that kind of assurance tonight, no matter how you feel, no matter what you think, but because you've trusted in Christ, you are resting in him, he is at work in your life.

And then finally, the last chunk of this lengthy passage in verses 52 to 59, Jesus speaks with the Jewish leaders and with the people about the intimate union and fellowship they can have with him. You see, the movement of this passage is from faith, to assurance, to union with Christ. In the minds of the religious leaders, Jesus has stepped way over the line.

He says that he is the bread who's come down from heaven. He says that he's giving his life for the world. He says that people may eat his flesh and live forever.

But when the religious leaders start arguing among themselves, Jesus, you'll notice, even pushes the point further. He says, only those who eat and drink my body and blood have life in them. Now, of course, this seems like an absurd image when we first hear it and when we first read it.

It seems unthinkable. Until we realize that what Jesus is pointing to is the intimate and essential union between himself and the believer. Those who have placed their trust in who he really is, and those who have been drawn whom the Father has given to him, they have this deep, intimate union with Christ.

The believer takes in Christ by faith just as you would eat bread, just as you would drink water, and the food and the drink become part of us, part of our system. Jesus says that he remains in us and we in him. We feed on Christ.

He is essential to our lives. We have this intimate fellowship, this intimate union with him, and he is the source of our life, the source of our health, the source of our strength, day in and day out. We can't live without this spiritual nourishment in our systems.

And the communion produced between Christ and the believing disciple is like the communion, Jesus says, between the Father and the Son. Now this, of course, and many commentators have noted this, this, of course, is depicted for us in the New Testament in a very clear way in the Lord's Supper. And when we

celebrate the Lord's Supper, what are we doing? Well, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we in fact are symbolizing the reality of our faith.

We are eating together the bread, the bread of life, symbolizing the body of Jesus. We are drinking this wine, the blood of Jesus shed for us. He sheds his life, the shedding of blood, so that we might have life.

And it's faith, you see, which is the receiving of this, which is the taking in of this nourishment, his body and his blood for us. And we eat and we drink with Jesus because we eat and we drink the body and the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is our food and he is our drink, but it is centered in faith, and our faith is the basis of our communion with him and in him, and we have this intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ.

So what's going on here? These people have come to Jesus, they've been hounding him, they're trailing him, they're following him, they want more out of him, but in the midst of this encounter, what they discover is that Jesus is not prepared simply to feed them again, so that they're only going to be hungry again, so that they're only going to come back to him again to give more food, more bread, but what he offers is himself. He wants them to understand that he is the bread of life and that this must be received by faith, that it is the work of God and their assurance is that they will be drawn by Jesus. The father will draw them to himself, and in fact the reality that they have this intimate fellowship and intimate communion with him.

Jesus says, I am the bread of life. In a world, in a culture where food is in abundance around us, and in a world where many people go to bed hungry tonight, Jesus says, I am the bread of life. During the second world war, the Nazis forced many 12 and 13 year old boys into the junior Gestapo, and these boys were treated very harshly and they were often given inhumane jobs to perform in order to toughen them up for service in the Third Reich.

When the war ended, most of them by that time had lost track of their families and they wandered about without food, without shelter, without places to live, without families. And as part of the post-war aid program to Germany, many of these youths, many of these young boys were placed in tent cities until they could be sorted out and placed in proper homes and given proper lives again. And here doctors and psychologists worked with the boys in an attempt to restore their mental health as well as their physical health.

And what they found was that many of these boys awoke in the night screaming, screaming in terror. The terror of what had happened, the terror of not knowing whether they would have enough to eat the next day, the terror of all that they had experienced as 12, 13 year old boys in the experience of war under the Nazi regime. And one doctor had a particular prescription or an idea for handling that fear.

After feeding the boys a large meal, he put them to bed with a piece of bread in their hands, which they were told to save until morning, to sleep with this piece of bread clutched firmly in their hands, to give them the assurance that they were okay, that there would be food tomorrow, that they would have a life the next day. The doctor found that the boys slept soundly because after so many years of hunger and desperation, they had finally found the assurance that they needed to sleep and to rest. As you face the fears of life, the struggles of life, the challenges of life, do you hold, my question to you tonight is, do you hold the bread of life in your hands? Do you know the assurance and comfort in life that Jesus gives? Have you eaten of the bread of life so that he is in you and you are in him? The bread that you eat day by day will sustain you for the day, but the bread that came down from heaven will sustain you forever.

And so I invite you to eat and to drink with Jesus tonight so that you will never go hungry and never be thirsty. Let us pray. Gracious God our Father, we thank you tonight for sending the Lord Jesus Christ.

We also acknowledge that our faith is often feeble and frail and weak, that we don't really understand often what it means to believe, but we pray that you'd help us to believe tonight, to trust in you, that we can have the assurance of life in Christ, that indeed we might find fellowship and new life with him. If we're hungry tonight, Lord, we ask that you would feed us, feed us with the bread of life so that we might have eternal life. Through Christ our Lord we pray.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26644.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-vissers/johns-gospel-eating-drinking-with-jesus/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net