

# Lake Geneva Bible Conference 1984-01 John 6:52

by William MacDonald

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of believing on Jesus to have eternal life and the sovereignty of God in drawing people to him.*

**Duration:** 38:13

**Scripture:** John 6:26-69

**Topics:** "Conference"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of studying a passage in its context, particularly in the Bread of Life Discourse. He highlights two key themes to watch for in the chapter: the recurring word 'believe' and the increasing difficulty of Jesus' teachings as the Jewish people reject him. The sermon then focuses on the feeding of the five thousand, where Jesus multiplies five loaves and two fish to feed the crowd. The speaker draws parallels between this miracle and the present-day need for Jesus to multiply our offerings to meet the world's needs. Additionally, the sermon mentions Jesus walking on water as a symbol of his presence and guidance in life's storms.

---

## Transcript

And I'd like to begin reading in verse fifty-two. Verse fifty-two, John chapter six, The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.

And I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. A passage of scripture that has been very, very difficult for many people. As you know, there's one church system that takes these verses and applies them to the Mass, or the communion service, or the Eucharist.

There's another church system that says that the body and blood of Christ are in, under, and through the bread and the wine on the table. And so we want to look at the passage this morning and see if that's really what it's teaching. Does it teach that the bread and the wine and the communion service really

become the body and blood of Jesus? And that by eating of them and drinking of them that you have eternal life.

And so what I'd like to do is begin at the beginning of the chapter and kind of walk through the chapter. We mentioned the importance of studying a passage in its context, and I don't think that's ever more important than in this particular chapter known as the Bread of Life Discourse. And let me just give you two keys.

I'd like you to watch for two things as we go through the chapter. Two keys. The first is the word believe.

The word believe has a way of recurring in this chapter. The second key is this, that the chapter starts off rather simply. And the more the Jewish people rejected the words of Jesus, the more difficult his saying became.

It's very important to see that. Light rejected is light denied. And some of Jesus' earlier statements were quite easily understood, but they weren't accepted.

And the more that the people resisted what he was saying, the more he used very difficult, complicated statements. So that before the chapter is over, some of his professing disciples walked out on him. And even some of the true disciples had difficulty with him.

So we begin at the beginning of chapter 6. And here you have the marvelous miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. It's interesting that it starts off with this. The Lord Jesus feeding 5,000 men plus women and children with five loaves and two fish.

If there was someone down in Williams Bay today who could take five loaves, and they weren't loaves of wonder bread either, they were like flat pancake type loaves, probably about the size of a pancake. If you know of somebody down in Williams Bay today who could take five of those and two fish out of Lake Geneva and feed 10,000 people, how would you react? I think it's good to ask ourselves that question when we come to the beginning of chapter. Actually, the miracle is still taking place today.

The world is still starving. The Lord Jesus was teaching this. By ourselves, we can't meet the needs.

But if we give him what we have, he can multiply it in blessing the thousands. This is a great vision, isn't it? Turn over to the Lord what we have and let him multiply it. He'll ask us to do what we can do.

Then he'll do what we can't do. And there'll be plenty left over. Then the second miracle is Jesus walking on the water to the disciples, verses 15-19.

Wonderful, isn't it? Jesus walking on the water. Once again, bring it right down here to Conference Point. The miracle of a man walking on the water.

Well, that miracle is still taking place in a way. It's still dark in the world and the sea is stormy and physically Jesus is absent from us. But you know, in light storms, he comes to us and he says, it's I. Do not be afraid.

And he brings us safely to our desired heaven. But our passage principally today begins in verse 22. Verse 22.

And notice now the progression in this section. The people begin following the Lord Jesus. They turn out to see him.

But you know, it's possible to follow Jesus and have wrong motives in doing it. First of all, they wanted to make him king, but to make him king to deliver them from Roman oppression. And also they followed him because their tummies were filled by the bread.

And so in verse 26, Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled. It's possible to follow Jesus from insincere motives. Then he said, work not for the meat that perishes, actually for the food that perishes.

For those of you who use the King James Version, oftentimes that word meat, it doesn't mean flesh, but it means solid food in contrast to liquid food. Jesus said, work not for the meat that perishes, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you for him as God the Father sealed. Well, they latched onto the word work.

Man always does that when religious subjects come up. They like to latch onto that word work because man wants to feel that he can do something in order to inherit eternal life. And so they said to Jesus, what work must we do that we might do the work of God? What shall we do that we might work the works of God? And Jesus said unto them, this is the work of God that ye, what? Believe.

Notice that very carefully. This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. Key words in the whole chapter.

And what it really says is that if a person wants to be saved, if God is drawing a person to himself, the first work he must do is come and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You can't work for God till first of all you believe on his Son. Good work in that sense follows salvation.

The first work is believing on him. Notice what happens next. Resistance.

Verse 30, they said therefore unto him, what sign showest thou then that we may see and believe thee? Read it carefully. Is this faith? He said, you want to work the works of God, believe on me. And they said, first of all, show us a sign.

Well, let me just say that the Lord Jesus is not, and God the Father, they are not pleased by the kind of faith that requires a sign. A sinful and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. God wants to be believed because he says it.

The surest thing in all the universe is the word of God. God cannot lie, he cannot deceive, he cannot be deceived. If God says a thing, it's truth.

In fact, truth is what God says about anything. And so it's really an evil heart of unbelief that comes to the Lord Jesus. I mean, he had just fed 5,000 with the loaves and the fish.

It just walked on the water and they said, show us a sign that we may see and believe. You see, that's man's idea. You show us, you prove to us, and we'll believe.

I want you to notice that that represents sinful unbelief. It's not going to get easier for them because of their attitude. Man says, show me and I'll believe.

God says, believe and I'll show you. He said to Martha, said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God. Faith said to the Lord Jesus that the cross come down from the cross

that we might see and believe.

Dear friends, we believe because he didn't come down from the cross. 1 John 5, 13, these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know. Hebrews 11, 4, by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

You begin with believing. I said the other night, last night and I repeat today, if you young people are having any trouble with the Bible, accept the Bible by faith. God will show you it's true.

He who has felt the force of it is not likely to deny the source of it. And that's absolutely true. I like to tell the story of Billy Graham.

Years ago at Forest Home Conference in Los Angeles, he was out there on the hillside having a duel with God. He had been imbibing doubts about the Bible. And he was out there wrestling with God over the whole subject.

And God's a good wrestler. And he won the match. And Billy Graham came to the place where he accepted the Bible by faith.

And he went forth to the Los Angeles crusade and he began to say, the Bible says. And he realized there was a change in his ministry. He realized that there was an authority in his ministry that he never had before.

And God began to save souls in that Los Angeles crusade. That was the beginning of his great ministry. Accept the Bible by faith.

Why? Because it's God's word. He'll show you. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak for myself.

You say, I want it to be proved. It's not God's way. It's not God's way.

That's what they were saying here. They were saying, what sign showest thou then that we may see and believe? What dost thou work? And then they brought up the example of Moses giving the manna in the wilderness. And I think they were saying, you show us a miracle like that and we'll believe.

Jesus said, verse 32, the manna was not life-giving. The manna sustained life, but it wasn't life-giving. I want to give you bread that if you eat of it, you'll never die.

Listen to how he says it. Jesus said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven. My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, giveth life unto the world. Well, they said, Lord, that's what we want. We want that kind of satisfying bread.

But they didn't really. But notice what Jesus said. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life.

He that cometh to me shall never hunger. And he that believeth on me shall never thirst. The word believing is coming up.

It's recurring like the cadence in this chapter. But, verse 36, Jesus knew they didn't want to believe. Jesus knew that the heart, even then, were being hardened.

I said unto thee, if you would see me and believe not. And that doesn't mean just seeing him physically there standing before them, but seeing one who performed miracles such as no man ever performed, seeing one speaking words, gracious words such as no man ever spoke. And the Lord said, I know you.

I'm speaking simply to you now, and you don't want to believe. And incidentally, I think it's worth pausing here just to say this, that when a man is unsaved, when a woman is unsaved, it isn't because they can't believe. It's because they don't want to believe.

There's nothing about Jesus that makes it impossible for anyone to believe in him. The trouble is in the human will, not the intellect. Some very intellectual people try to create the impression that the trouble is up there in their minds.

It isn't. It's in their will. Jesus said, you seek, you search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they that testify of me, and you don't want to come to me that you might have life.

That's true. If there's somebody here today, you're unsaved. You're not a decided Christian.

The trouble is in your will. You don't want to be saved. You don't want to exchange your sins for Christ's.

Good to remember that. But then the Lord Jesus says, he retreats, I think here, into the sovereignty of God. He says in verses 37 to 40, but that's all right.

God's will is going to triumph anyway, and it really is true. All of the sin and unbelief of the heart of man is not able to frustrate the purposes of God. These people thought that they held control over their lives.

They thought they were the masters of their faith, the captains of their souls. They thought the world was their oyster and that they could do what they pleased, but notice the way Jesus answers them. All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.

He's saying, in effect, there are really two sides to salvation, and one side is the fact that the Father has to give a person to the Lord Jesus, and the other is that the person must, by a definite act of faith, receive Jesus Christ as Savior. That's true. Election is a Bible doctrine.

Predestination is a Bible doctrine. But so is human responsibility, as they should never be separated. I never mention one without mentioning the other.

And isn't it wonderful how those two doctrines are here in verse 37, sleeping peacefully together, while the theologians argue the point year after year. For I am come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, should raise it up at the last day.

And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on him should have everlasting life. Notice, I will raise him up at the last day. Everyone that believeth on him should have everlasting life.

The Jews in verse 41 and 42 resented his saying that he came down from heaven. Why? Because they knew what he meant. That meant that he had an existence before Bethlehem.

That meant that he was the eternal Son of God. They got the point. A lot of people don't get it today, but they got the point.

They knew what he was saying. The Jews, therefore, murmured concerning him because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. They said, is this not this Jesus? We know him, we know his parents in Nazareth.

Once again, in verses 43 to 51, Jesus said, don't murmur, quit your murmuring. There are two sides to salvation. God must draw and men must believe.

Jesus, therefore, answered and said unto them, murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up on the last day. Written the prophets, they shall all be taught of God.

Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father save he who is of God, he hath seen the Father. I'd like it in those particularly, verse 47, because it's never clearer in this entire chapter than in verse 47, and we're coming back to it.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. Just tuck that away in your mind. He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

But they weren't believing on him. They were resisting him. They were rejecting him, rejecting his words.

And so in verse 41, he says, I'm the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

It's going to get harder. Watch out. You resist the Lord, you refuse the message, his words are going to become more difficult.

Now he's talking about eating his flesh. Let me just pause here to say, he's speaking to the Jewish people, and the whole idea of eating human flesh would be absolutely abhorrent to them. Certainly the Bible never endorsed cannibalism.

And the idea of drinking human blood would be abhorrent to the Jews. It's absolutely repulsive, as it would be to us today. And so you can imagine their reaction when the Lord Jesus speaks like this.

They say, how can a man give us his flesh to eat? Why do you think Jesus would have said, well, you're misunderstanding me, I'm using figurative language. But he doesn't. The more they resist, the harder it gets.

He just restates the fact over and over again in more difficult language. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. And we have to face the fact this morning, what does it mean to eat his flesh and drink his blood? If I should ask you today, have you ever eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of the Son of Man? What would you say? I've actually heard this passage of Scripture read at the breaking of bread in one of the assemblies.

It has nothing to do with it at all. What does it mean? Let me say in the simplest possible terms, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man means to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have ever come to the place as a guilty, self-confessed sinner, and the best way you know how, turned your life over to Jesus Christ for salvation, you have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood.

How do you know? I'll show you how I know. Go back to verse 47. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath eternal life.

Verse 54. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. Now, when we were in school, we were taught that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.

Isn't that right? Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. What do you mean? Well, 1 plus 3 equals 4. 2 plus 2 equals 4. Therefore, 1 plus 3 equals 2 plus 2. How's my mathematics? Well, I don't think you can deny it. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.

Because 1 plus 3 equals 4, and 2 plus 2 equals 4, therefore, 1 plus 3 are the same as 2 plus 2. Okay, you have that formula here. In verse 47, Jesus said, Believe on me, and you have eternal life. And then in verse 53, he said, Eat my flesh and drink my blood, and you have eternal life.

Therefore, to believe on him is the same as to eat his flesh and drink his blood. You say, why didn't he say it? He did say it in verse 47, but they rejected it. And you know, the same sun that bleaches linen tans the skin.

But the same sun that melts wax hardens clay. And if the wax won't be melted, the clay will be hardened. That's why Jesus' sayings are becoming ever more difficult in this chapter.

Which is very solemn, I think, to those who are resisting the gospel. To those who are refusing the Son of God and keeping him outside. Every time you hear the gospel and resist it, it becomes harder to accept it.

I think most of us who are saved here today are really glad that we were saved when we were, and sorry that we weren't saved sooner. So, verse 54. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed, and my flesh is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father.

Verse 57. So he that eateth me, he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven, not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead.

The manna in the wilderness, I said it, sustains life for a while, but not even permanently. He that eateth of this bread shall live forever. These things said he in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum.

Many of his disciples, when they heard this, said, this is a hard thing. Who can hear it? Now I think we all realize that in the New Testament there are two kinds of disciples. There are nominal disciples, and there are real disciples, genuine disciples.

And this passage of scripture is speaking about people who profess to follow the Master, but they never were truly saved. It's a little picture of life today. Do you know that the United States is swept today by a wave of professions? There are hundreds of thousands of people who say they're Christians, but they've never been born again.

Do you ever stop to think if the Lord came today that there'd still be people breaking bread next Sunday? There would. There'd be hundreds of people breaking bread next Sunday if the Lord came today. Recently I was up in Michigan.

I stayed with a dear young couple. They had moved there from Oklahoma, and they had been in fellowship in an assembly for years. They'd been baptized and in fellowship in an assembly, but there had been no change in their life whatever.

And an anonymous preacher came down from Vancouver and preached the gospel, and they were terribly convicted of sin, and they got saved. I tell you, it's wonderful to see the Christians getting saved. Now that theology is a little bit faulty, but you know what I mean.

They were saved, and now their lives are different. Now their lives are radioactive with the Holy Spirit. Now their lives are crackling with the supernatural.

They were only professed disciples before. And that's what you have here in verse 60. Many of his disciples, when they heard this, said, this is a hard saying.

Who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Does this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? That's rather an interesting observation the Lord Jesus made. He said, If you think it's hard to eat my flesh now, which was a bit grotesque. I mean, Jesus hadn't even gone to the cross yet.

Jesus hadn't even died yet. And here they were, and he's speaking about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and his blood is still coursing through his veins, and he's still there in a complete body. He said, If you think it's hard to understand it now, suppose I go back to heaven.

If you insist on looking at it in a literal way, how would you eat my flesh and drink my blood when I go back to heaven? It would be harder then, wouldn't it? And he did. He ascended back to heaven. And then he said, It's the spirit that quickeneth.

The flesh profiteth nothing. What does that mean? It means, even if you Jews could literally eat my flesh and drink my blood, it wouldn't do you a bit of good. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

What's he saying? He's saying, Eat my words. That's what he's saying. And when he says, Eat my words, he means believe my words.

Appropriate my words to yourself. Take them in, believe them, and obey them. Wonderful, isn't it? The flesh profiteth nothing.

The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But, there are some of you that believe not. See, there's the word believe again.

It really follows the pattern. They have been steadfastly resisting the Son of God. His teachings become ever more difficult.

And he exposes them as unbelievers. Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me except it be given him of the Father.

Man is so proud, you know. He thinks, Well, I can be saved. I'll just put it off until it's time to die.

I'll live it up during my lifetime. Jesus said, Don't you presume on salvation in that way. There are two sides to salvation.

God the Father has to draw you, and you then have to make the decision for Christ. Somebody said to me once, Well, supposing God isn't drawing me. And I said, Fall down on your knees and ask him to.

You can't hide behind the doctrine of election. The only way you can ever know if you're elect is by trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior. You'll never know in any other way.

That's what Paul said of the Thessalonians. Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God. How? Because when the word came to them, it didn't come as the word of man.

It came to them as the word of God. The life-producing word of God. It says, Verse 66, From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.

What were they? They were false disciples. They were nominal disciples. They didn't have the root of the matter in them.

Dear friends, let me ask you today. Has Christ made a difference in your life? Can people look on you and say, You're different. That's what the world is waiting for.

I like to tell the story of a young fellow out in, well, many of you know him, out in Honolulu. Second World War. He used to go out and shoot baskets after hours.

And, uh, another fellow, Dick Kegler, used to go out and play basketball with the fellows. And Dick was watching Bert. Bert Graves.

Many of you know him. Dick Kegler was watching Bert Graves. He said, Boy, that guy's different.

One night he went up to Bert after the game and he said, Bert, you're different. You've got something I don't have. I don't know what it is, but I want it.

It wasn't hard to leave that fellow to the Lord. I was with him a few weeks ago in Pennsylvania, Dick Kegler, going on brightly for the Lord. He saw that Christ made a difference in the life of a man.

From that time, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will you also go away? Simon Peter answered, Lord, to whom shall we go? For thou hast the words of eternal life. To whom shall we go? When Peter said we, he meant we, twelve.

Peter was thinking of the entire body of the disciples, the twelve disciples. And we believe, twelve of us, believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said, Watch out when you use that word we, Peter.

You're saying twelve, but only eleven. Only eleven. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you, twelve, and one of you is the devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

That's interesting, isn't it? How the Lord Jesus works with the multitude. The multitude comes after him. He fed the multitude.

They wanted bread. They wanted to feed their stomachs. He wanted to feed their souls.

He told them how they could have that bread, that eating of it. They would never hunger again. That wasn't exactly what they wanted.

They didn't want to come believing. They wanted to come some other way. And as the chapter goes on, the crowd thins out.

Christ, I think it was G. Campbell Morgan, said, Christ first woos, then he winnows. That's good. He first calls the multitude to him, and then when they come to him, he starts to shake them.

He winnows them. Christ first woos, then he winnows. And at the end of the chapter, chapter 11, 11.

Now, I hope this clarifies the portion of Scripture that for many people is very, very difficult. Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man. If somebody ever asked you now, have you ever eaten his flesh? Have you ever drunk his blood? You can say, I hope you can say yes.

On such and such a date or in such and such a time in my life, I realized that I was a guilty sinner. I realized if I died, I'd go to hell. And I reached out by faith and received the Lord Jesus, believing that he died for me on the cross of Calvary.

I've eaten his flesh and drunk his blood. Please realize the passage has nothing to do with the breaking of bread, nothing to do with the communion service, nothing to do with the Eucharist, the Mass, or anything of the sort. Please realize that the way, that the reason the Lord Jesus spoke in such an oblique, difficult language, he was speaking to people who were increasingly rejecting his words.

And the more you reject the words of Jesus, the more difficult it becomes to receive them. Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge. It's people who have a heart to obey, who tremble at the word of God.

They're the ones that progress best in the spiritual life. You can have a great IQ and be very dull spiritually, but you can't have a great OQ, quotient, and be dull spiritually. You may not have the great intelligence, but if you have a heart to obey the Lord Jesus, if you have come to the Lord to obey word of God, you will have a great and you will have a great OQ, and you will have a great OQ, and you will have a great OQ, will have a great heart to obey and will have a great OQ, and will OQ, unto life.

God forbid that anybody should go from this place into an everlasting hell resting on a broken reed. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11856.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/lake-geneva-bible-conference-1984-01-john-652/>

# *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](http://www.sermonindex.net)**