

The Gospel of John

Lesson 10: I Am the Bread of Life -- John 6:25-71

The crowd has tracked Him down again. They sailed across the lake looking for the man who fed them yesterday, and you can almost hear their stomachs growling beneath their questions. Jesus sees straight through them. "You are seeking me," He says, "not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." They wanted breakfast, not a Savior. And so He says something that must have sounded almost offensive to hungry people: "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life." Stop chasing another meal. Start hungering for what will actually feed your soul.

Then comes the claim that turns the whole crowd upside down. "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." The God who once rained down manna in the wilderness is now standing in front of them, calling Himself the true bread come down from heaven. The manna kept their ancestors alive for a day; this bread gives life that never ends. He is not offering them something. He is offering them Himself. And He presses it with language so vivid it scandalizes them: unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.

You can feel the crowd recoil. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Even many of His own disciples grumble, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" And here is the thing we must not miss: Jesus does not soften it. He explains it, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life", but He does not take it back. He is calling them to feed on Him by faith, to take Him so deeply into themselves that He becomes their very life. And many of them will not. The crowd that wanted free bread melts away.

What is left at the end of this chapter is a small, bewildered group and a question that still hangs over every reader. Jesus turns to the Twelve and asks, "Do you want to go away as well?" And Peter, who does not understand much better than the rest but who has nowhere else to go, says the words that may be the truest confession a struggling believer ever makes: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." This is a chapter that thins the crowd and reveals the heart. Read it slowly, and let it ask you whether you are following Jesus for the bread, or for Himself.

Group Discussion: Jesus told the crowd they were seeking Him because they "ate their fill of the loaves," not because they understood the signs (v. 26). How can we tell whether we are following Jesus for what He gives us or for who He is, and why does this distinction matter so much?

Personal Reflection: Jesus says, "Whoever comes to me shall not hunger" (v. 35), yet we often try to feed our souls on everything but Him. What are you most tempted to feed your soul on instead of Christ, and what would it look like this week to feed on Him?

Study Questions

1. Jesus said, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life” (v. 27). What is the difference between these two kinds of food, and how do we end up spending our lives working for the wrong one?
2. The crowd asked, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” and Jesus answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (vv. 28–29). Where are you tempted to relate to God mainly through your own works rather than through trusting Him, and what would change if you rested in Him?
3. Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (v. 35). What is Jesus claiming about Himself, and how does this first of the great “I am” sayings reveal His identity?
4. Jesus promises that whoever comes to Him “shall not hunger” and “shall never thirst” (v. 35). What deep hungers and thirsts of your own heart is Jesus inviting you to bring to Him rather than to the world?
5. Jesus said, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (v. 37), and “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (v. 44). How does the rest of the passage, especially “they will all be taught by God” (v. 45), show us how the Father draws people, and how does this differ from the idea that God arbitrarily chooses some and refuses others?
6. Jesus promises that the one who comes to Him He “will never cast out” (v. 37). How does this promise speak to your fear of being rejected or not truly welcome, and how do you receive it?
7. Jesus said, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (v. 53), and then explained, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all” (v. 63). What did Jesus mean by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and why should we understand this as feeding on Him by faith rather than in a literal, physical sense?
8. When many turned back, Jesus asked the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” (v. 67). What might tempt you to turn back from following Jesus, and what helps you keep following when His words are hard?
9. This chapter presses the hardest question of discipleship. Many disciples grumbled, “This is a hard saying” and “turned back and no longer walked with him” (vv. 60, 66), while Peter confessed, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (v. 68). What does this passage teach about the nature of true, persevering faith, the danger of a faith that follows only for benefits, and the reality that disciples can fall away?
10. Look back over this chapter, from “I am the bread of life” to Peter’s confession. What is one specific way Jesus is forming you to feed on Him by faith and to keep following Him, even when His words are hard?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Exodus 16:13–18, the manna God gave Israel in the wilderness; Deuteronomy 8:3, man living not by bread alone but by every word from God; Isaiah 54:13, all your children taught by the Lord; John 6:44–45, the Father drawing people as they are taught and learn from Him; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, the Lord's Supper as remembrance of His body and blood given for us.