

The Life of Christ

Lesson 9: The Bread of Life: Hard Words, True Words -- John 6:25-69

The day before, Jesus had fed more than five thousand people from a boy's lunch of bread and fish. It was the kind of miracle that makes a crowd loyal, and they came looking for Him again the next morning, hoping, no doubt, for breakfast. But 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 the gift; they had not yet wanted the Giver. And so Jesus begins to turn their hunger toward something far deeper than bread.

"Do not work for the food that perishes," He tells them, "but for the food that endures to eternal life." Then He says the thing that will divide the crowd before the morning is over: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." He is not offering them another meal. He is offering them Himself. The deepest hunger of the human heart, the ache that no amount of bread, success, pleasure, or achievement can fill, is a hunger for God, and Jesus says He is the bread that satisfies it.

As He goes on, His words grow harder. He speaks of giving His flesh for the life of the world, of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, language that points to His coming death and to the faith that feeds on Him and finds life in His sacrifice. The crowd is offended. "This is a hard saying," they mutter. "Who can listen to it?" And John records something sobering: from that moment many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him. The free breakfast had drawn a crowd; the hard words thinned it out.

Then Jesus turns to the Twelve with a question that still hangs in the air for every follower: "Do you want to go away as well?" And Peter, who so often spoke first and best, answers for all of us who have weighed the cost and found there is nowhere else worth going: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." This lesson is about that moment of decision, when the words of Jesus stop being easy and comfortable and become hard and searching, and we discover whether we came for the bread or for Him.

Group Discussion: Many in the crowd followed Jesus eagerly for the free bread, but turned away when His words became hard. Why do you think people are drawn to the benefits Jesus offers yet resist His harder teachings, and how can we tell the difference in our own hearts between wanting His gifts and wanting Him?

Personal Reflection: Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger." What perishable things do you most often reach for to satisfy a hunger that only Christ can fill, and what would it look like to come to Him instead this week?

Read John 6:25-69

Study Questions

1. In John 6:26–35, the crowd seeks Jesus for more bread, but He redirects them to “the food that endures to eternal life” and declares, “I am the bread of life” (v. 35). What is Jesus teaching about Himself and about the deepest hunger of the human heart?
2. Jesus exposed that the crowd wanted His gifts more than they wanted Him. What perishable “bread,” whether comfort, success, pleasure, or approval, do you most often work for, and how does it leave you still hungry?
3. When the crowd asked what they must do to be doing the works of God, Jesus answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (v. 29). What does this teach us about the nature of saving faith and about coming to Christ?
4. It is possible to follow Jesus mainly for what He provides rather than for who He is. Honestly, do you come to Jesus more for His blessings or for Himself? How would your walk with Him change if He, and not His gifts, were your true desire?
5. Jesus said, “Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (v. 35), and that He would give His flesh for the life of the world (v. 51). How does Christ alone satisfy the deepest needs of the soul, and what does it cost Him to give us that life?

6. Where are you spiritually hungry or empty right now, in a way you may have tried to ignore or to fill with lesser things? What would it mean to bring that real hunger to Christ and let Him satisfy it?
7. In verses 53–58, Jesus speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and many were offended, yet He explains in verse 63 that “the flesh is no help at all; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” What did Jesus mean by this hard saying, how does it point to receiving Him and His sacrificial death by faith rather than to anything physical, and why is it important not to misread it?
8. Jesus did not soften His teaching to keep the crowd, even when it was hard to hear. What teaching of Jesus do you find hardest to accept, and are you willing to receive His hard words as true words, trusting that He speaks them for your life?
9. In verse 66 many disciples turned back, and Jesus said no one can come to Him unless the Father draws and grants it (vv. 44, 65), yet He also said everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes (v. 45) and freely invited all who would to come and believe. How do we hold together God’s gracious initiative in drawing sinners and the genuine, universal call that people are truly able to answer, without concluding either that we save ourselves or that God arbitrarily chooses only some and leaves the rest unable to respond?
10. When others turned away, Peter confessed, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (v. 68). Looking back over this lesson, where is following Jesus costly or hard for you right now, and what is one specific way you will choose to stay with Him because He alone has the words of eternal life?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Deuteronomy 8:3, that man does not live by bread alone but by every word from the mouth of the Lord; Isaiah 55:1-3, the invitation to come, buy, and eat what truly satisfies; John 4:13-14, where Jesus offers living water that becomes a spring welling up to eternal life; Romans 10:17, that faith comes by hearing the word of Christ; Philippians 3:7-8, where Paul counts everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.