

I Am the Bread of Life

Scripture: John 6:32-59

Code: 43-36

We have been studying together the Gospel of John, and just going through verse by verse, paragraph by paragraph. Typically, when we come to Christmas Sunday, I stop whatever series I'm in and do a special Christmas message. I've done that for 40 plus years with an occasional Sunday prior to Christmas when we stayed in the series because there was something in the text that connected to well with Christmas. And that is the case this year. So, we're going to look at John chapter 6 today, John chapter 6.

I looked ahead a few weeks ago and just kind of planning and anticipating what I might present to you, and I began to carefully prepare reading through John 6 for our regular studies. And it struck me that this would be a very powerful and wonderful and helpful text to stay in. So, for the last number of weeks, we've been working our way through John 6, and we'll continue to do that, and when we pick it up again after the holidays. But I want to draw your attention to the sixth chapter of John, and particularly verses 32 to 59 where our Lord gives this great sermon on, I Am the Bread of Life. He repeats that several times. I am the Bread of Life. He is the true Christmas bread.

Bread is starting to pile up at the McArthur house, I will admit. Every Christmas this happens to us. We get it in the mail. We get it from FedEx. We get it stuck on the porch. We get it from folks at the church. Last Sunday I went home with bread in two arms, and there'll probably be a little more bread today. And that's good by me; I love bread. We get bread in boxes. We get bread in cans. We get bread in paper bags around Christmas, so it's like a maniacal carb experience *[laughter]* to consume all this bread, but I'm a bread lover.

There's something about Christmas and bread I guess just in a general sense, and you might wonder, where does that come from? Why is there so much interest in bread around Christmas? Well, it does have some interesting history. It really does. If you're from Germany, you've heard of stollen, S-T-O-L-L-E-N, which is a German Christmas bread that was first prepared in 1545 for the Council of Trent. And since then, has been the standard traditional Christmas bread baked and consumed by German folks around the world.

If any of you come from Poland or more of Eastern Europe, you may know about oplatki, which is a Christmas bread that the Polish launched in the tenth century. And it's still being prepared every Christmas.

Now, for all of you Italians, you know about Panettone, Panettone bread. Panettone comes from two words, the Italian word for bread is "panne" and "Tony" is the Italian word for the guy who fixes your car. *[laughter]* So, you're not buying that? Actually, actually, back in the 15th century, the 1400s, there was a baker by the name of Tony. That's where it came from. And he wanted to impress the king because he wanted to marry his daughter, so he baked some bread. Hence, Panettone bread. I don't really think that's the best way to impress a king about what you might offer to his daughter. I don't know how well it all came out for Tony. *[laughter]* But Tony made a mark on history because if

you go into any Italian market or almost any market, you find a section with Panettone.

Interesting to note also that the word “Bethlehem” in Hebrew means “house of bread”, “house of bread.” So, bread has been associated with Christmas. In this chapter, the sixth chapter of John, however, we find the true Christmas bread who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And I’m going to do something this morning that I rarely do, and that is to cover a rather extended portion of Scripture. So this will be an experience that you cannot count on ever happening again. *[laughter]* I want to read this great sermon. It’s one great sermon starting in verse 32 of John 6. “Jesus then said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, always give us this bread.’”

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not 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 of all that He has given Me I lose none, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.’”

“Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread that came down out of heaven.’ They were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven’? Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Be not 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 shall all be taught of God.’ Everyone who has heard 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, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.’”

“Then the Jews *began* to argue with one another, saying, ‘How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.’ These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.”

A shocking day toward the end of the Galilean ministry of Jesus as He taught the Jewish people in the synagogue at Capernaum. The most compelling statement around which all of this is built is the repeated statement, “I am the Bread of life. I am the Bread of life.” That’s His claim, verse 32, verse 33, verse 48. This is the first, by the way, of 7 “I AMs” in the Gospel of John, in which our Lord takes the tetragrammaton YHWH, the verb “to be” in Hebrew, the name of God who is the I AM that I AM, and applies it to Himself and adds a metaphor. “I am the Bread of life. I am the Good Shepherd. I

am the Vine. I am the Way. I am the Truth. I am the Life. I am the Resurrection and the Life.” All of those I AMs are efforts on the part of our Lord to make clear that He is one in the same as God.

This is the first of those seven I AMs, in which He takes the name of God, and in this case applies as He does on several of those occasions, a metaphor to explain something about His nature and His work. Now, you have to understand how monumental this sermon was given in the Capernaum synagogue. He’s talking to Jewish people, and He presents this powerful claim that He has come down from heaven. And that they have to eat His flesh and drink His blood if they want to have eternal life. Now, the Jews all understood the issue of eternal life, life in the Kingdom, life forever, life in heaven, life with God, blessed life, joyous life. They understood that.

Jesus is saying, “I and I alone are the means by which that eternal life can become yours.” This is a long passage, but it can be easily divided into two very familiar components. And that’s what we’ll do this morning. It’s full of repetition because it was so stunning and, remember, they were listening. And repetition is even more important to an audience that is listening. And so John records a fullness in this sermon that we don’t always find in the Gospel record because this is such a stunning claim.

We’re going to see Him saying the same things over and over and over so that they might register with His listeners and with us. The two parts that we need to look at here, very simple, divine provision of the bread, human appropriation of the bread. Divine provision of the bread, human appropriation of the bread.

You need to have your Bible open and you need to be looking at your Bible because we’re going to be looking for those two elements in these verses. This is going to be more like a Bible study than a sermon. I can’t preach a sermon on a sermon. This is a sermon. I can’t make metaphors on metaphors. This is a metaphor. So, we’re going to take it at face value and see if we can’t examine it.

To say that He is bread is to use really a metonym for food, nourishing food that gives life and sustenance. Jesus used the word “bread” to refer to that when He said, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Bread, then, was simply a word that encompassed all nutritious food. Jesus is saying that, “I am your food. I am your true soul food.” First of all, let’s look at the divine provision of the bread. This is God’s side here, the divine side, the heavenly side. God’s provision.

Several features are indicated here about God’s provision of this bread. First of all, this bread is divinely preexistent, divinely preexistent. And I want you to watch this because this is why this works so well as a Christmas section because it continually repeats the reality of the incarnation. Let me help you to see that. Look for the phrase, “came down out of heaven.” You will find it, for example, in verse 32 at the very beginning of the message. “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.”

Verse 33, “For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven.” Verse 38, “I have come down from heaven.” Now, he switches from the metaphor, the bread has come down, and applies it to Himself and says, “I have come down.” Verse 41, there’s a lot of shock about that, but I just want you to notice they understood exactly what He was saying. The Jews are grumbling because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of heaven.” In verse 42, they are wondering how this man

whose parents they know can say, "I have come down out of heaven."

Verse 46, again says, "Not that anyone has seen the Father except the One who is from God." He has come down out of heaven. Verse 50, "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven." Verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven." Verse 58, "This is the bread which came down out of heaven." Every time you see that, and it's repeated again and again, you are hearing a statement affirming the incarnation of a preexistent person. He didn't come into existence. He came down out of heaven. Anyone who claims that falsely is a lunatic or a deceiver, who would have a hard time convincing people.

Over and over and over Jesus speaks of His preexistence. John began his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," the Word meaning Christ. Therefore, Christ was there preexistent with God, coexistent with God, self-existent with God eternally. You cannot ever reduce Jesus to a created being. Yes, His body was prepared by God for Him, but as a person He is the eternal Son of God. He existed everlastingly in the presence of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He is God of very God. That's why John 1:14 says, "We beheld His glory and it was the same glory as the Father."

If you go back to John, chapter 3, there's a helpful statement our Lord makes in the conversation with Nicodemus. He says, "No one has ascended into heaven. No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven," and who is that? The Son of Man. I think of that verse every time I see another silly book about somebody who went to heaven and came back. No one has done that. No one has ascended into heaven and come back to teach us. Paul, you say, is he an exception? Absolutely. He was caught up into the third heaven. He came back. He didn't tell us anything. He said, "I can't even speak of the things that were there." The saints that came out of the grave at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, we don't know who they were. We don't know where they went. They certainly did not deliver any messages from heaven. Those exceptions prove the rule. Nobody goes into heaven and comes back to instruct us.

Back to verse 46. "Not that anyone has seen the Father except the One who is from God. He has seen the Father." I remind those people again. You did not go to heaven and you did not see God, and you do not have a message for us. That is exclusively the right of the Son of God, the preexistent one. Don't believe lies about people going and coming from heaven. Don't buy those silly books and waste your time. No one, not even the most holy saint has gone up to heaven to bring the Word of God down to us. The only One who has come from heaven is the One who was always there. The only One who has brought us heavenly things is the One who descended from heaven, namely the Son of Man.

This is the claim that Jesus makes repeatedly in John 8:42. Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me for I proceeded forth and have come from God. He sent Me." Which means that He existed in the presence of God from all eternity. In the thirteenth chapter of John's Gospel, and this is so foundational, I want it embedded in your mind. John 13:3, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God." That's the night of the upper room discourse with his disciples, that great thirteenth chapter begins with the declaration that Jesus has come from heaven and is going to return there.

In John 16, verse 28, Jesus says, "I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world. I am

leaving the world again and going to the Father.” In the seventeenth chapter and the fifth verse, “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” Eternity past. Verse 8, “For the words which you gave Me, I have given to them, and they have received them, and truly understood that I came forth from You. And they believed that You sent Me.”

The first thing then to understand about the divine provision of the bread is that the bread was preexistent. The bread was eternal. Jesus is not a created being who came into existence like you and I do at the point of conception. He always existed as God the Son. So there is divine preexistence. In the coming of the bread, secondly, there is divine purpose. There is divine purpose tied to the eternal preexistence of the Lord Jesus Christ is the reality that He came because the Father purposed for Him to come. It's not casual. It's tied up in divine planning, and I can show you that. It's such a clear statement repeated again and again that it's unmistakable.

Verse 32 at the end of the verse, “It is my Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.” Verse 33, “The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven.” It is there called the bread of God. It is God who sends the bread. The bread is God's to start with to give. Verse 38, “I have come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” Verse 39, “This is the will of Him who sent Me.” Verse 40, “This is the will of My Father.” And again in verse 57, “As the living Father sent Me.” So you have here divine preexistence and divine purpose. The Father sending the Son.

Now, it is not only the coming of the Son of God that the Father purposed. That's kind of a general reality. That is true obviously, but it is more than just a general reality that God sent his Son and sort of let things then happen whatever way man would decide they would happen. Not so. God not only purposed to send His Son, He purposed what His Son would accomplish when He arrived. The specificity of it is in verse 37. “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and him who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out.” Verse 39, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given me, I lose none, but raise Him up on the last day.” Verse 40, “This is the will of My Father.” Again, verse 44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise Him up on the last day.”

And this is consistent with Old Testament prophesy. Verse 45, “It is written in the prophets and they shall all be taught of God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Now, are you starting to see the plan? God purposes to send the Son, and then God purposes to draw certain people to the Son. The Son receives the people, keeps the people, raises the people from the dead to fulfill the Father's plan. It is not a plan to begin something. Listen, it is a plan to complete it. It is the plan for the complete glorification of those the Father draws.

Jesus made statements that affirm this in His ministry, such as in chapter 10, verse 29, “My Father who has given them to Me. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand.” Are you starting to see the picture? The Father draws, the Father gives, the Son receives, the Son keeps, the Son raises, and no one can snatch whoever is in the Father's will and the Son's hands out of his hands. This is crystal clear.

Chapter 17 again, that great high priestly prayer of our Lord, verse 2 says, “Even as you gave Him authority over all flesh,” meaning the Son, “that to all whom you have given Me, He may give eternal life.” Verse 6, “I manifested Your name to the men whom you gave Me out of the world. They were

Yours. You gave them to Me and they have kept Your Word.” Verse 9, “I ask on their behalf. I don’t ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.” Then verse 24, “Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.”

Over and over again, “You gave them to Me. You gave them to Me. You gave them to Me. They were Yours. You gave them to Me.” How did they become God’s? By divine election. He chose them before the foundation of the world, wrote their names in the Lamb’s Book of Life. In time, He draws those who belong to Him by His own sovereign choice. He draws them to Christ. Christ receives them, Christ keeps them, Christ raises them. That resurrection is not merely a spiritual resurrection; it’s a physical resurrection as well. In the last day, they are resurrected. So that is the diving purpose, from election to resurrection. It starts when God determines who is His, and it goes through the drawing and the receiving and the keeping and securing and ultimately gathering into heaven and even raising from the dead.

Verse 45 is a very important verse, often overlooked I think. It’s a quote from Isaiah, Isaiah 54:13. “It is written in the prophets and they shall all be taught of God.” The only way anybody can come to the truth is if God is his teacher. “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” People don’t come to God under the powerful sway of human reason. The preacher is not the means. The preacher is only a tool to present the truth. The drawing is divine. The Father is the true teacher. The Father is the instructor of the heart and the mind.

So we have this bread, preexistent, this bread that is provided for those who are within the purpose of God. So the bread comes down from heaven, comes to earth to fulfill the will of the Father; not just in a general sense that His will was to send. His will was to send His Son and then by means of His Son, draw – give to His Son, and ultimately bring to eternal glory spiritually and in resurrected form. That’s the full picture. Understanding this bread then, divinely preexistent and fulfilling divine purpose.

Thirdly, in looking at God’s provision, divine promise. Divine promise. Why do we want this bread? Well, what does this bread do for us? Well, what does Christ do for us? Why is He important? Well, go back to verse 33. “The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives – ” what? Life to the world. Life, *zoe*. Not *bios*, not biological life. *Zoe*, spiritual life. That’s why He came. The promise connected to the bread is spiritual life. And He is the only bread of God, the only living bread, the only bread of life, the only one who has come down, the only source of life for the whole world. Notice please, the phrases that are used to describe this.

In verse, well, how many verses have we seen? Verse 32 and 33 talk about the bread that comes down and the bread that gives life and then we don’t go very far until we hit verse 35 and again, “I am the bread of life.” And then verse 40, again we see, “This the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have – ” Now life is expanded with a descriptive, “ – eternal life.” Eternal life. Now, we’re talking about eternal life. Verse 47, “I say, he who believes has eternal life.” Verse 50, “This is the bread which comes down out of heaven so that one may eat of it and not die.” Not die.

Verse 51, “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever, and the bread which I give,” again he says, “I give for the life of the world.” It’s life and it’s eternal life. Verse 53, “Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.” 54, “He who eats My flesh, drinks My blood, has

eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day.” Life, life, life, life. Eternal life. Verse 58 at the end, “He who eats this bread will live forever.” How is this possible? Because of verse 56, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.”

How do we get eternal life into these mortal bodies? Because we come into real union with Christ. Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” “He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.” We are one in Christ. And so His eternal life is in us, granting us eternal life. Really incredible promises. Jesus repeated those same promises a number of times about His union with His people. For example, in that upper room the night of His betrayal, He says in John 14:20, “In that day you will know that I am in My Father and you in Me, and I in you.”

Do you know that if you are truly regenerate and you belong to God through faith in Christ that the eternal life which you possess is the eternal life of Christ in you? In you. And as we read in John 10, no one is powerful enough to break that union. That’s the security of every believer. So, divine promise. What’s the promise? Life. What kind of life? Eternal life. What is the source of that eternal life? A union with living eternal Christ.

We don’t follow just the teaching of a noble religious leader. We’re on our way to death unless He lives in us, unless His eternal life takes over. So the bread of life is heavenly bread. The Lord Jesus Christ comes from divine eternal preexistence into time and into space to fulfill the divine purpose of the Father, which is to provide salvation for His chosen people. That salvation is dependent on a union with Christ that is a true spiritual reality and is why we live forever.

And it culminates in a resurrection. Several times Jesus says, “I’ll raise him at the last day. I’ll raise him at the last day. I’ll raise him at the last day.” It is a union that will not only be a union in spirit, but it will be a union in spiritual body. Philippians 3, “We will have a body like unto His glorious body. We will reflect His glory. We will be made like Christ when we see Him as He is,” right? This is what it means to be a Christian. It’s not following the teachings of a man. It’s having His life in us. This is the work of God. This doesn’t happen unless you’re taught of God, as verse 45 says. This does not happen unless God the Father draws you.

You say, “Well, what are we supposed to do?” Well, that’s just one side of this amazing duality. That’s the divine provision. Let’s talk about the human appropriation. What’s our responsibility? Sit around hope it happens? No, no. In the wonderful mystery of salvation, we are commanded to appropriate this bread. Please notice in verse 34, the Jewish people who were listening to Jesus said, “Lord, give us this bread.” Most likely, they were talking about the physical bread because He had been creating food for them. They wanted the bread that would satisfy their constant hunger physically, but Jesus isn’t really talking about that. He’s talking about Himself as the bread they really need.

So in verse 35, He says, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me.” Isn’t that interesting? “He who comes to Me.” You just said, “Nobody can come unless the Father draws him,” and yet here it says, “He who comes to Me.” So the first requirement is to come, to come. Yes, verse 37 clarifies, “All that the Father gives Me will come, and the one who comes to me, I will not reject.” Not so much because the person is of value, but because the gift of the Father is of value. So the first thing is to come. And since no one can know whether they’ve been chosen, the message is far and wide to be preached to the ends of the earth telling sinners to come, to come, come.

Secondly, to look. Notice verse 40, "This is the will of My Father that everyone who beholds the Son," everyone, everyone. There aren't limitations here based upon our understanding of the doctrine of election. All who come, all who come, anyone who comes, I will not reject. Everyone who beholds. What does the word "behold" mean? It's a Greek verb, *theoreo*, which basically means to look at intently, to scrutinize, to study, to gaze on. It's not a passing glance kind of word, not just a brief look. Very strong word. In fact, the same verb, *theoreo*, is used in John 8:51 for a statement about seeing death. Seeing death means experiencing death. It is also used, the same verb, in John 17:24 where Jesus says, "I want them to come to heaven, those who believe in Me so they can see My glory." That means full exposure, full experience.

So, what is the human's responsibility? Our responsibility laid out for us in a series of commands and invitations, come, come. Come to Me, come to Me. And when you get there, experience it, gaze at it, scrutinize it, look carefully, thoughtfully, see who I am. A lot of the people who were listening to Him in the synagogue that day had done just that. They had come to Him, and they had attached to Him. They were following Him. They were watching Him. They were listening to Him. They were scrutinizing Him.

So you come, you look, and you look carefully at Jesus. But there's another word that's really the critical word. Look at verse 35, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will not hunger and he who –" and here's the word, "believes in Me. He who believes in Me." Verse 40, "This is the will of my Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life." Verse 47, "I say to you, he who believes has eternal life." "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever *believes* shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 5:24 says the same thing. The theme verse for the whole gospel of John, "These things are written that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name." It's about believing. It's about believing. Another way to understand it would be John 1:12, "As many as received Him." You have to come. You have to look. You have to be exposed to the truth, but you must believe. Going back to the metaphor of the bread, go to verse 50, and from verse 50 on is really the closing invitation of this sermon.

"This is the bread which comes down out of heaven so that one may eat," and now we're back into the metaphor. Believing is eating. Taking in, receiving, appropriating. Verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." Verse 57, "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me." Again, verse 58, the end of the verse, "He who eats this bread will live forever." I mean this is a powerful metaphor that everybody understands. You have to take Me in. It's not enough to come and listen. It's not enough to admire to get some kind of information. You have to eat. You have to appropriate. You have to receive Me. That's our responsibility.

Since we don't know who God has chosen, we can only know we have all been held accountable to come, see, and believe. Believe what? That I am the bread. He says that over and over, "That I am the bread that came down out of heaven, that I am the bread that came down out of heaven." So it starts with believing in the person of Christ, okay? Believing in His preexistence, His incarnation, God in human flesh, believing in the person of Christ. But let me tell you something quickly, believing in the person of Jesus Christ as the living bread is not enough. Not enough. Something else.

You not only have to believe in Him as living bread, you have to believe in Him as dying blood. What? Verse 51, "I am the living bread. I came down out of heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. And the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." Now, he's talking about giving up His life. Very specific terms. Verse 53, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourself." 54, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." Verse 55, "For My flesh is true food and My blood is true drink." Verse 56, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me in and I in him."

I have to tell you, this is so shocking for the Jews in the synagogue that day that I'm surprised there wasn't a riot. Leviticus, first of all, Leviticus 17, Deuteronomy 12, Deuteronomy 15 forbids Jews drinking blood. So this is just – this is, if nothing else, really insensitive. But He's not really talking about drinking blood. This is, of course, a chapter that has been mutilated by the Roman Catholic Church, and they have used this to develop the Mass where Christ is re-sacrificed again and again and again. And you eat His flesh and drink His blood, just exactly what He's not talking about. Blood is simply a metonym for His death, as it is throughout the New Testament. So what is He saying? You must accept the person that I am and the death that I died.

You can believe in Jesus as the preexistent Son of God who came into the world and is the source of eternal life, but unless you believe in His sacrificial death, you cannot be saved. You cannot possess eternal life. As bread, He nourishes. As blood, He cleanses. Blood, then, speaks of His death. These Jews had a big, big problem with this issue. The idea that their Messiah would die as a sacrifice, a huge problem for them. They were utterly unwilling to accept that. Even the disciples struggled with that, right? When Jesus said, "I'm going to die," no, no, no, no Lord. Peter says, "No, no," and Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan!"

And it was only after the resurrection that He met them on the Emmaus Road, took them back to the Old Testament to show them from the Old Testament the Messiah must suffer and die. And when they went out to preach in the book of Acts, they were preaching to the Jews initially the Messiah had to suffer and die. He had to be the divine Lamb providing the atonement that satisfied the wrath of God for His own. Again, we don't worship a noble human teacher. We worship God in human flesh. But we don't worship Him just for the nobility of His divine teaching. We also worship Him as our sacrifice for our sins who died in our place.

You have to be able to eat His flesh in the sense that you take Him as the one who nourishes the soul. And you have to be willing to drink His blood in the sense that you accept his sacrificial death. This is all way too much, way too much for Jewish people to handle, and you can see their reaction later in the chapter. It's just over the top. Verse 52, they can't even get to the part about eating His flesh, let alone the part about drinking his blood or accepting His death.

And so in verse 60 saying they were having difficulty with this, "Jesus conscious that His disciples grumbled at this said to them, 'Does this cause you to,' what? 'stumble?'" Well, what was he talking about? The blood. Are you stumbling over the fact that you're going to have to accept My death? The answer to the question is yes, that's why the apostle Paul said that the cross, the preaching of the cross, I Corinthians 1, to the Jews is a stumbling block, a stumbling block.

So, as a result, verse 66, "Many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."

They came, they looked, they believed. Maybe they could eat the bread part, maybe they could accept who He was. The blood? Too much, too much. But this is what is necessary to appropriate the bread. So Jesus is the true Christmas bread. To believe in His person, to believe in His death is to receive eternal life.

So Jesus said to the Twelve in verse 67, "You don't want to go away also do you?" Simon Peter answered for all of them, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." And then this, "We have," What? "believed." "We believe it all. We know You are the Holy One of God." The Jews were grumbling. All the way back in verse 36 Jesus said, "I said to you that you've seen Me. You've come. You've looked, and you don't believe. Verse 41, he says, "They're grumbling," John does. Verse 42, they're still grumbling. Verse 43, Jesus says, "Stop doing it." Verse 52, they're arguing, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Verse 61, even the disciples are grumbling. Verse 66, they leave. Vacate the synagogue, leaving only Peter and the Twelve who believed.

Just in conclusion, a few things to think about. Eating is necessary. If you want eternal life, eating is necessary. You can't just come. You can't just admire. People do this all the time, all the time. Oh yeah, I have a lot of respect for Jesus, a lot of respect for Jesus. You can't just come and admire. You have to eat, which is to believe fully. But eating is in response to hunger. So, the people who eat are the people who are what? Hungry! What is hunger? It's the aching of the heart of one who knows he's empty. That's the work of the Holy Spirit to make the heart hungry. That's where the Father starts to draw. The hungry heart sees the bread.

And, by the way, eating is personal. It's not a group event. You can all go out to dinner, but the food has to go in your mouth. Lots of people can do lots of things for you. They can come over and change the curtains, fix the room. People can do a lot of things to help you. You have to eat. You can't do that by proxy. Eating is necessary. Eating is in response to hunger. Eating is personal and eating is transformational. If you don't eat physically, you will die. If you eat, food you take in transforms you, and that's what Christ does.

I don't know what kind of bread is at your house, but I hope you've all partaken of the true Christmas bread. Let's pray together. This has been such a wonderful day and it's not over yet as we again celebrate tonight, but Lord we thank You that Your Word is so powerful and so clear and so consistent. Its divine authorship is unassailable. Thank You for giving us the truth.

I pray for those who are here who maybe have come, looked, or are looking, but haven't believed, received, eaten, accepting Christ not only as the bread that nourishes the soul, but the blood that cleanses the soul. May nothing about the gospel be a stumbling block, but may the gospel be a welcome message fully embraced. May it be today that there's some persons who've heard this who will eat, who will receive Christ as Lord and Savior and receive with Him the eternal life. We thank You that we are secure in that life because if we do believe, if we do come, it's because You've drawn us. Father, You've given us to the Son, and you blessed Son will keep us and hold us and raise us at the last day. We thank You for the glory of the gospel and the opportunity we have to celebrate it again today.

Father, now we ask that You would do Your work in Your way. Father, draw many to Yourself. We give You praise for privilege, undeserved, unearned, the gift of grace that has granted us salvation when we were Your enemies. We thank You, Lord, that You once made us desperately hungry and then You showed us the bread of life, Father. And we learned from You as You taught us and You

drew us. We thank You that Christ received us and holds us until the resurrection when we're fully glorified in Your presence forever. Thank You for this great truth and may it ring in our hearts as we celebrate in these days of Christmas. We give You praise, in Christ's name. Amen.

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