

The Bread Of God – John 6:22-33

We're in the middle of a Christmas series called Know Jesus, Know Christmas. Because Christmas is all *about* Jesus. All about the nearness of *God* in Christ. And if you know him, you know Christmas. From the presence of God to the peace of God. And not just now, but all year long.

But if you don't know Jesus, no Christmas. At least no more than lights, gifts, parties, and food. *Know* Jesus, Know Christmas; *no* Jesus, N-O, *no* Christmas. So turn with me to John 6 and let's make sure it's K-N-O-W. John 6:22-33.

Intro

Having just come away from the miracle of feeding 5000 people with bread and fish, Jesus uses the bread as a *metaphor* to convey some amazing truths about who he is and what he offers. The first part of which, is that he's the bread of God.

V22 – *On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea* [the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee] *saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. [23] Other boats from Tiberias* [a town on the west side of the sea] *came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. [24] So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.* Important background for the following conversation.

[25] When they found him on the other side of the sea [the western side], *they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” [26] Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves* [the bread]. *[27] Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal* [his mark of authentication, and approval, and support].”

It's the first of a series of exchanges between Jesus and those who were seeking him. Three of them. Three exchanges in v22-33, and four more in the rest of the chapter. A series of discourses where the crowd asks or says something, and Jesus responds with some bottom lines.

The first one is this, from v25-27.

Make sure you seek Jesus for the right reasons (v25-27)

Or with the right motives. Make sure you pursue him with the right heart. Or if you already *know* Jesus, make sure you *follow* him for the right reasons. That's the bottom line.

Notice in v25 that he doesn't answer their question of when he *got* there, but cuts to the chase and addresses their motive for even asking. Their motive for seeking him.

“Truly, truly, I say to you [v26], *you are seeking me, not because you saw signs* [miracles with a purpose; miracles that reveal my identity], *but because you ate your fill of the loaves.* You're not asking because you want to *know* me, you're asking because you want to be wowed. You want something to post. Something viral. Something for yourself.

It's like people in our day who seek Jesus only for what he can *do* for them; in an earthly sense. Only for what he offers right *now*. A better life, bigger house, better job, good friends, more clients, maybe even a spouse and family. That's why a lot of people seek Jesus. For some thing or some one, other than just him.

And Jesus says don't. V27 – *Do not work for the food that perishes* [don't use Jesus to pursue things that are temporary], *but* [work] *for the food that endures to eternal life* [seek after sustenance and satisfaction that lasts], *which the Son of Man* [referring to himself] *will give to you.”*

How about it? Are you seeking Jesus? Have you walked in here looking for something more in life? More than the daily grind, the nightly fear, the regular disappointments, or the pervasive hopelessness? Loneliness? If so, you're in the right place. Bless you.

But make sure you seek for the right reasons. To know the One who makes all that pale in comparison. Make sure you seek him not to get, but to give. To give him all the worship he deserves; the devotion he requires. Not for what you might gain or how you might benefit.

You will. You *will* benefit. With life to the full and life forever. The very presence of God in your life. But you have to come to him for the *right* reasons, not the wrong ones. For who he is and what he's *already* done. Make sure.

And if you already *know* Jesus, if you *already* follow him, this might be a good time to make sure *your* reasons are right.

Do you follow him for the thrills? The emotional highs? Amazing experiences? Occasional goosebumps? How about guilt relief? Having done something wrong, do you seek him just to feel better about yourself?

It's possible to follow Jesus for all the wrong reasons. Selfish reasons. Reasons other than glorifying him with your life and worshipping him in your heart. Just like it's possible to *seek* him for all the wrong reasons. Seek him and never really know him. Like the crowds in *his* day. So whatever you do, make sure it's the *right* reasons.

That's the first exchange. And the first bottom *line*.

The second is found in v28-29 – *[28] Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”* “What are the things God requires of us? What activities? What deeds?” They missed the point.

Jesus was talking about spiritual food and life forever, and all they heard was *work*. *Do not work for the food that perishes* (27). That was their focus. Because it went hand-in-hand with their take on the Old Testament Law. That you have to *do* things to please God. *Do* things to curry his favor. *Do* things to be with him. So they wanted to know what.

And this time Jesus *answered* their question. Even using their verbiage to make a play on words. V29 – *Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”* The only “work” God requires is belief in his Son. Which is no work at all. Like receiving a gift on Christmas morning.

When I was little, my dad used to let all his Christmas gifts pile up on his lap as we opened ours. And pretty soon we'd say, "Come on Dad. Open yours." So he'd pull out his pocketknife, and very slowly begin slicing the paper at just the right places. It was like watching paint dry. But it wasn't work! Just a little fun to stretch out Christmas. The only "work" was receiving the gifts in the first place. The only "work" was believing there was something inside.

V29 is a play on words to say . . .

You can't work your way to God, you have to believe (v28-29)

Only believe. That's the bottom line. Believe in Jesus. Trust him. Depend on him. Embrace him in your heart. That's the only "work" God requires of us. *That* [we] *believe in him whom he has sent*. The reason for all his miracles and the reason for this book. Jesus is the one sent from God, and if you're going to do what God requires in life, you have to believe in him.

In him. Not just *about* him; that he existed, and taught, and did some miracles; but *in* him. Who he is and what he did, to save your soul and make you whole. Who he is and what he did to forgive your sin and cleanse your heart. Redeem your life and secure your eternity. That's the only "work" God requires. Believe in his Son.

And thank God for it, because no amount of real work would suffice. No amount of good things, right things, or even godly things will get you to God. We're not saved by works, but grace; God's unmerited favor, through faith. Through our belief in Jesus.

And yet we think and act otherwise all the time. Some people relying on their earnestness to carry the day; their seriousness about the things of God. Others think it's their spirituality. Or knowledge. Or conservative values that gets them into God's good graces. A few might even think it's their holiness.

But most think it's good *works*; good deeds. "Do more of those than anything bad, and you'll go to heaven." That's the view held by most people. And they're spectacularly deceived.

You have to believe in Jesus and Jesus alone, as your Lord and Savior. Full stop. The pearly gates will not open to you based on the things you've done or the life you lived. They'll open only on your belief in Jesus. Bottom line. You have to believe.

Which brings us to the third exchange in v30-33 – [30] *So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?"* "If we're supposed to believe in the one sent from God, prove it." They wanted a miracle that authenticated his message. Totally missing the fact that he already did one. Multiplying the loaves and fish. And totally missing the fact that the one God sent was standing right in front of them. Hello!

Are you like that? Are you missing his work in *your* life? The guideposts, the wake-up calls, the nudgings, the signs of his presence? Is he standing in front of *you*? Knocking on the door of your heart? They're not the only ones who missed him. The only ones who turned a blind eye. The only ones who asked for more.

Our fathers [they said in v31] *ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'*" (Ex 16:15; Neh 9:15) "You want us to believe you? Give us a sign like that." Can you imagine it? He was there! He was there in the wilderness. And here they are telling *him* what happened. Clueless.

[32] *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.* His statement is like one of those before and after sentences that you see on Wheel of Fortune or something. It wasn't *Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father*. God. Correcting what they wrongly implied. That it was Moses who did it. That it was *Moses* who gave them a sign to authenticate his message. Not true Jesus says.

And in the second part of the sentence, he's pointing out the difference between what the Israelites of old received, and what's better. Sure, they received bread from heaven, *but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven* (33). The real stuff. The best stuff. Bread that lasts. [33] *For the bread of God [v33] is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*

Did you catch it? Because they didn't. True bread, the bread of God, is a person! And not just any person, but *he who comes down from heaven*. God in the flesh.

True life and sustenance are found in Jesus (v30-33)

That's the bottom line. And the whole idea of *bread*. It provides life and sustenance. Emphasized by the analogy Jesus makes with manna. Manna, remember, was a bread-like substance that God provided the Israelites of old, while they lived in the desert on their way to the Promised Land. Oh, don't miss the parallels!

Every morning, they woke up to a day's worth of nourishment and sustenance on the ground. And every day they collected it and ate it. Because it was just enough, and it didn't last.

So Jesus picked up on their reference and drew a comparison. A comparison to point out the similarities and differences between the bread *from* God, and the bread *of* God. Both are from heaven, yes. But one was temporary and the other is permanent. One gave physical life, the other gives eternal. Gives! One provided filling, the other nourishment. One was a meal, the other is a feast. One was a morsel, and the other . . . is a person. True life and sustenance are found in Jesus.

• Not empty rituals

Not cheap substitutes. Not symbols of convenience. Like going to church just to be there. Thinking your attendance, just sitting through the service, will bring you life and nourishment. "All you have to do is darken the door." Think *that* way, and church becomes an empty ritual.

Or how about taking communion, thinking that the act itself gives you life and sustenance. That just by eating and drinking, God conveys grace; blessing and nourishment to your soul. It doesn't. And treating it that way makes it an empty ritual.

Another is infant baptism. A practice in some religions where they believe eternal *life* is conferred on the baby. Just by sprinkling her with water.

All empty rituals. Because *true* life and sustenance are found in Jesus. And Jesus alone.

Not empty rituals, and . . .

- **Not religion**

True life and sustenance are not found by holding and practicing certain beliefs. Whether a formal religion or an informal one. One that's named or unnamed.

Unnamed, like all the *secular* religions of our day. Sports. Music. Pop culture. Climate activism. Wokism. Transgenderism. Homosexuality. Politics. Any set of beliefs and practices that serve as the driving force of your life, is a religion. And it's not only false in these cases, and fails to *give* life; it actually drains it.

Same for the vast majority of *named* religions. Formal ones. From Buddhism and Islam to Hindus and Mormons. And a whole bunch more under the umbrella of "Christianity;" much *closer* to home. All empty religions, that pay *lip* service to God, but don't fear him. *Feign* to worship, but go through the motions. They're not a source of life *or* sustenance.

And the fact is, even *biblical* religions fall short. Like ours. *Our* beliefs. *Our* practices. True religion is *necessary* for life and sustenance, yes; but it's not the source. Jesus is. Jesus is the bread.

Does that mean we should throw the baby out with the bath water and close the doors? Stay home as some people do? No. It just means that our belief and practice are a *means* to an end, not the end in and of itself. The end is Jesus. A union with Jesus. A relationship with Jesus.

Not rituals or religion . . .

- **Only a relationship**

A relationship with Christ. That's the whole idea of bread here. Jesus *is* life, *the bread of God*; and Jesus *gives* life. *For the bread of God* [v33; the very *life* of God] *is he who comes down from heaven and gives life*.

So the life of God is found in a person, and to have what he gives, you have to have him. You have to receive him into your soul. Into your heart. Much like you take in bread to your stomach. It's a metaphor, for a relationship, of the closest nature.

And it's available . . .

- **For everyone who believes**

Everyone. *For the bread of God* [v33] *is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world*. Not just Jews, as they thought in that day, but Gentiles too; everyone else. Not just church people, or spiritual people, or people with their act together, but all people. The life and sustenance of Jesus is available to everyone.

But you have to believe. Right back to v29. The work of God, what he requires, is *that you believe in him whom he has sent*. Believe, in Jesus. Bottom line.

Know Jesus, know life. Know life, know Christmas.

Prayer – Father, sanctify our motives; our reasons for seeking you and following you. Rid us of anything selfish; anything wrong. Help us to rest in you and find all we need in you;

in a relationship with your Son. We believe, God. And trust you for every step, all of our days.

You Are Loved