

**"Jesus, The Bread of Life"**  
**(John 6:1-71)**  
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Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),<sup>2</sup> and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"<sup>6</sup> He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

<sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

<sup>8</sup> Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up,<sup>9</sup> "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there).<sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

<sup>12</sup> When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."<sup>13</sup> So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

<sup>14</sup> After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."<sup>15</sup> Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake,<sup>17</sup> where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them.<sup>18</sup> A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough.<sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened.<sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid."<sup>21</sup> Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

<sup>22</sup> The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone.

<sup>23</sup> Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.<sup>24</sup> Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."<sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

<sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

<sup>30</sup> So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?” <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup> “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup> But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

<sup>41</sup> At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup> They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”

<sup>43</sup> “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. <sup>44</sup> “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup> No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

<sup>52</sup> Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

<sup>53</sup> Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” <sup>59</sup> He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

<sup>60</sup> On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

<sup>61</sup> Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! <sup>63</sup> The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. <sup>65</sup> He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”

<sup>66</sup> From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

<sup>67</sup> “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

<sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

<sup>70</sup> Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” <sup>71</sup> (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

We are going to be spending at least a couple weeks in John chapter 6. It’s a very long chapter and the whole chapter is a unit where one event leads to another. So, we’re going to read the entire chapter, but for today the focus of the sermon will be on the first fifteen verses, on the story of the miraculous feeding.

[read **John 6:1-71** here]

This story in the life of Jesus is the only miracle that is recorded in all four of the gospels. So that, in itself, tells us it is important. Here’s where I’d like to go with this sermon. I want to speak to you about The signs, the test, and the truth.

### **The Signs**

In verse 2 we are told that the crowds followed Jesus because they saw the signs that Jesus had performed, in particular healing the sick. At the end of the story, in verse 14, after the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, we are told that the people saw the sign Jesus performed, that is, they were well aware of the what was going on, where one second there was no food and moments later everyone had their fill, even having 12 baskets left over.

Why did Jesus perform these signs, these miracles? What was the purpose in doing them? When we read the gospels and see Jesus performing miracles, they almost always have a theological purpose. In other words, the miracles have a greater purpose beyond the miracle itself. Consider the types of miracles he performed. There were miracles over nature like calming the sea or walking on water. There were miracles over dark spiritual forces when he would cast out demons from those who were possessed. There were miracles over sickness, disease and death, like healing the blind and lame and even raising the dead. What were the purposes of all these miracles?

The first was to authenticate who he was and the second was to garner faith in the witnesses. From the teachings of the Old Testament, it was expected of the Messiah to perform great miracles, like giving sight to the blind. And it was expected that the Messiah would be a person like Moses. In Deuteronomy 18:15 it’s written, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.” Moses was, bar none, the greatest miracle worker in all the Old Testament. Even the 5000 men who witnessed the miracle of the bread and fish thought the same thing. They said, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

So, when Jesus is performing these miracles, he’s providing us with evidences and proof, that he is the One the Scriptures prophesied would come. This was the experience and conclusion of the crowd. But they had an incomplete understanding of Jesus.

Now, there might be some of you here who are also in need of evidence. You too may have asked God for a sign or a miracle. Or maybe you said, “If only God would show me irrefutable proof, then I would believe.”

If you're in that camp, here's what you have to be careful of. There is not a person on the planet who disagrees with the miracles of Jesus. Yes, you may disagree that such miracles ever occurred or even that they could occur. But no one wishes that they shouldn't occur. No one is against miracles. No one is against sick people getting well or hungry people getting fed. Only the worst of people would be against that.

Do you know what people have a problem with when it comes to Jesus? If it's not his miracles, then what is it? It's his teaching. Jesus didn't get arrested primarily for what he did. He got arrested for what he said. It wasn't the action police, the do-good police who were after him. It was the speech police. It was the speech police who couldn't tolerate what he said about them and what he said about himself.

When we get to the end of the chapter, after Jesus' long discourse on him being the Bread of Life, he taught things like: The bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world, and I am that bread. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

He also said strange things like, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day (53-54)."

Then after such an amazing teaching of Jesus' self-disclosure and revelation, the author writes, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." This is in direct contrast to the reason why they followed him in the first place. Do you remember? They followed him because of the miracles. They followed him because of the signs. They were essentially saying, keep being the sideshow act, keep being the performer, the doer, but stop teaching, stop talking. In leaving Jesus they were saying, we liked you when you were doing things that had an immediate benefit to us, but now that you've started talking about who you are and what you require of us, that was too much, so they left him.

In your journey to discover who Jesus is, lay aside what you think you know about him and allow him to tell you who he truly is. And be prepared to discover things about him that will shock you. If he doesn't shock you, you've found the wrong Jesus.

**That was the sign, but in addition to that there is also a Test.** Look with me to verse 5. Jesus saw the great crowd of people coming towards them, and he lays out a question to Philip. "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" The author tells us in verse 6 the reason Jesus asked Philip. "He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do."

In John chapter 1 we are first introduced to Philip. He was the one to whom Jesus said directly, "Follow me." And he did. Philip then went off and found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (1:43-45)." Philip had already drawn the conclusion early on that Jesus was the One. Jesus was the Prophet that Moses prophesied, as well as the fulfillment of what the other prophets wrote. Philip was part of the Twelve. He was part of the inner circle. One would think that Jesus was preaching to the choir. Philip's already in. And yet Jesus still wants to test him. Why do you think that is? And do you think Jesus wants to test those of us who are already in, or at least we think we are?

The purpose for Jesus testing Philip was to see if he also has faith. In one sense, it's through a test where the presence of faith is determined. Jesus wants to see what Philip understands about who Jesus is? Is it merely on the surface level or does he have a deeper understanding?

Philip responds to the test saying, it would take tens of thousands of dollars to feed a crowd so large. He only sees the problem and doesn't realize that the solution is right in front of him. Is Philip any different from the crowd? Is he along for the ride because Jesus is the hottest thing in town? Is he following Jesus because he's hoping he'll be one of Jesus' ministers when Jesus comes to power? Maybe Jesus will assign him secretary of the interior or minister of education or some great title like that. Or he just wants to be on the winning team.

It was Philip who later said to Jesus during the Last Supper, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered him, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" I think we can conclude that even after three years of being with Jesus, Philip was still unclear about who Jesus was.

I think there are some in this room who are like Philip. You consider yourself a Christian. You were raised in a Christian family and you've gone to church your entire life. You've heard the bible stories since you were a small child. You might have even had the experience where you prayed a prayer or raised a hand or walked to the front of a chapel, where you accepted Jesus as your Savior. But maybe you're still not really sure you are a Christian. Maybe you still have some doubts. Maybe you don't have assurance that when you die you'll be in heaven. I believe Jesus is speaking to you. He's testing you to see if you truly believe in him. Are you also just along for the ride or do you truly believe?

We've looked at those who only go to Jesus for the signs. And we've looked at the those whom Jesus tests. Now let's look at Jesus himself.

### **Here's the Truth**

You might be a seeker, you're still on the outside, but you're peering in, you're curious, you're investigating. You might be a skeptic. And if your skepticism you may have created your own version of Jesus, a straw man, that you've chopped down and rejected. Or you might even be on the inside, you consider yourself a genuine Christian, or at least you think you are. Whichever group you are in, you might be doing the same thing the crowd had done. At the end of the story, the people came to a certain understanding about Jesus. They said, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." They knew their Old Testament. They knew the teachings on who the Messiah was going to be. And they came to the right conclusion, but something was off.

John tells us in verse 15, "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself." Now this is a really important verse. What this verse tells us is that people want Jesus on their terms, according to their wishes, according to their understanding. Some people want a Jesus that doesn't demand much from them. Some people want a Jesus of love, but not a Jesus of justice. Some people want the Jesus who provides riches, but not the Jesus who requires sacrifice. Some people want the Jesus who heals, not the Jesus who expects suffering. This is what it means to take Jesus by force. We are forcing him into our own image, into what we want him to be for us.

What would Jesus do with such people? What would Jesus do with people who have a personal agenda for Jesus? He would withdraw from you. He would say, "That's not how it works. You come to me on my terms, not on your terms."

Now, the irony is this, exactly a year after this miracle Jesus was taken by force, unjustly, against his will. He was arrested, falsely accused and convicted, he was mocked, beaten, flogged, spit upon and crucified by violent forceful men and yet, he went willingly, so that those whom he has called would come to him and be saved. He went to the cross so that we would discover who he really is, that He is the Savior of the world. Friends, forsake all your assumptions about Jesus. Let go of all your demands you have of Jesus. Don't try to force Jesus into your mold. If you do that, you'll end up losing him, but if you allow Jesus to be who he truly is and accept him, you and I receive the bread of life, the one who quenches our thirst and satisfies our hunger.

Let's pray.