

"Eating When You're Not Hungry"
(John 6:26-71)
Pastor Peter Yi
June 17, 2018

(John 6:26-71)

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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."

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

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

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

³² 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. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

³⁵ 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. ³⁶ But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ 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."

⁴¹ At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴² 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'?"

⁴³ "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. ⁴⁴ "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁵ 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. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. ⁵⁰ But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. ⁵¹ 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."

⁵² Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³ 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. ⁵⁴Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just 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. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

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

⁶¹ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴Yet 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. ⁶⁵He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”

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

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

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

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

Today, we’re coming upon the crux of chapter 6. So far, we’ve looked at the miraculous feeding of the 5000 men, where we are introduced to the theme of Jesus being the one who cares for his people. He’s the one who not merely meets our physical needs but he also meets our deepest spiritual needs. The people fail to understand who Jesus is and why he came and they try to take him by force, to be the kind of king they had in mind, rather than accepting Jesus for who he truly is and it’s from these people that Jesus withdraws, but shortly after he intentionally seeks out another group of people. He goes after his disciples who are struggling their way across the lake in the middle of the night. Jesus performs another miracle by going towards them by walking on the water. It’s to this group that Jesus offers himself and his presence. By doing so, their fears are removed. The point of this story was that Jesus is the one that comes to us, on his terms, to offer himself as our Saviour and our response is to welcome him into the boat.

That now brings us to today’s story. Let’s continue where we left off.

[read **John 6:26-71** here]

From this passage I’d like to speak to you about three things:

The Person: Bread of Life

The Promise: Will never hunger

The Prerequisite: Be called, Believe

Let's first look at the person. The entire Gospel is about a person. This gospel of John and the other three gospels were written to tell us who Jesus is. Even though you'll find great moral teaching there, that's not the reason it was written. Even though there are accounts of a man's life that's very admirable and worthy of imitation, that's not the reason the gospels were written. They were written to introduce us to a person. Perhaps of the four gospels, this is most seen in the gospel of John.

Several times in this passage Jesus refers to himself as the Bread of Life. We see it first in verse 32-33:

³² 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. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

To which the people reply,

³⁴ "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

³⁵ 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."

Then later in verse 41 Jesus says,

"I am the bread that came down from heaven."

Then in verse 48 he says it again,

"I am the bread of life."

Again in verse 51,

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven."

Then in verse 58 he says referring to himself,

"This is the bread that came down from heaven."

What do these references to bread reveal about Jesus?

Bread is the most basic of food. It is life. Bread to ancient culture is like rice to Asian culture. To have bread means you have the very means to life and survival. To be able to eat means to be able to do the tasks of every day, to work and play and study and raise a family. To say that bread is life is to say that food is life. So when Jesus says that he is the bread of life, he means that he is the very means of existence, both now, physically, and later, eternally. He is the very basis, the foundation, the bare absolute necessity for life. He cannot be anything less than that.

Then it tells us that Jesus has his origin in heaven. He tells us that he came down from heaven. That is very different from every other human being that's ever lived. If someone asks you where are you from? We can say our country of birth. China, Korea, Canada. Or we can respond with our citizenship? Or we can respond with the city where we grew up. Winnipeg, Vancouver, Toronto, Chicago. Or you might even answer that I'm from my parents. Now, this is not as common today, but in Asian cultures and more ancient cultures, you were only known by being the son of your father. This is how you would identify yourself.

In this passage Jesus says I am the “true bread.” In what sense is Jesus the true bread? Well in this exchange with the people, they were asking Jesus for another sign, just like Moses did when manna came from heaven to feed the multitudes of Israelites. So, this is the starting point. The starting point is not the loaf you bake in your oven or the loaf you would have bought at the neighborhood bakery. We’re bypassing all the regular bread and we’re jumping to Manna—bread from heaven, bread from Moses, bread from God. They’re saying what Moses did was spectacular. Can you top Moses?

To this Jesus corrects them and says, “Well, first of all the bread didn’t come from Moses. It came from God, who is my Father and he is the one who now gives you the true bread from heaven.” Just as manna came from God, I too, the true bread, came from God. My origin is not of the earth. It is of heaven. Of course they were utterly confused and shocked by these words. In verse 41 it says,

⁴¹ At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² 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?’”

He says, “I am bread of God that comes down from heaven.” “I am the bread that gives life to the world.” Jesus is telling us that ultimately, he is not from this world. He’s from another world. He’s from heaven. Only one from heaven could show people how to get there. And being from heaven, he’s revealing to us that he is divine. This is why Jesus is to us the one who can bridge the gap between heaven and earth, between God and humankind.

This is who the person, Jesus, is. He is the bread of life from heaven.

Now let’s move on to the promise.

What is the promise that Jesus gives us? The promise is eternal life. Verse 27 says,

Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

In verse 33 it says,

For the bread of God is bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

The explicit promise is stated in verse 35. 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.”
To never go hungry, to never go thirsty is to live forever.

When we go down a few more verses Jesus says,
“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believe in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

In verse 47 Jesus says again,

⁴⁷ Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. ⁵⁰ But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. ⁵¹ 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.”

Eternal life is a phrase that occurs at least 17 times in John’s gospel. Let’s take a moment here to see what it means. From the 17 or so occurrences we discover that eternal life is something that is given by God. It is never seen as something that we achieve by our works. It is a gift.

Eternal life is also always predicated by faith, by believing. And the belief is not merely in the existence of eternal life, but in the one who grants it, who gives it to us. And that’s Jesus Christ.

Eternal life is the work of Christians, meaning, we plow the earth, sow the seeds, we work and labor so that we can enjoy the harvest of seeing people receive the gift of eternal life.

Eternal life stands in distinction from judgment. In John 5:24 Jesus says, “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life.” Friends there will be a judgment. When we die we will all stand before God, and one of two things will happen. Either you will receive eternal life, or you will be judged.

Later in John 5:39, Jesus says, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.” Jesus is saying that it is true, the Scriptures do reveal teachings about eternal life, but it does more than that. The Scriptures primarily speak about the one through whom eternal life comes, namely Jesus. Jesus is saying, eternal life comes from me.

Later in this chapter, in referring to the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross, Jesus says, “whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day (54).” This is not referring to the Lord’s Supper or communion. Jesus is speaking about his death. And the eating of the flesh and the drinking of the blood is a metaphor for faith. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus is to believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus. And when we do, we have eternal life.

John 10:27 says that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gives eternal life to his sheep, and they shall never perish, and no one will snatch them out of his hand.

Then in John 17:3 Jesus says these words in his prayer to the Father, just hours before his death. “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Eternal life is to know and be known by God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. Eternal life is an eternal relationship of knowing your creator and your Saviour.

So, this is the incredible promise that Jesus offers as the bread of life. He offers us eternal life, life instead of judgment. It is not something we can earn, but we receive through faith. Eternal life is through Jesus Christ, through his death and suffering. It is life as an everlasting relationship with God and Jesus.

Now what's the prerequisite? How do I get eternal life?

Let's look at three verses.

³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

And

⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

And

⁶⁵ He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them." (or granted, or given)

Let's look at verse 44 first. "No one" means not one, which means everyone. This applies to every human being. Not one person can come to Jesus, that is, come to Jesus for salvation, come to Jesus in order to believe in Jesus. So, no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws them to Jesus. Jesus tells us that there is a prerequisite to come to Jesus. The prerequisite is that the Father has to draw them or bring them to Jesus.

Then if we look at verse 36, it says, "All those the Father gives me will come to me." There's the world of humanity. Of all human beings there is not one person who can come to Jesus for salvation unless they are drawn to Jesus by God the Father and those who are drawn to Jesus, meaning those the Father gives to Jesus, will indeed come to Jesus. Now, does this verse mean that there will be those who are brought to Jesus against their will? No. Finally in verse 65 Jesus says that in order to come to Jesus, God the Father has to enable or grant them.

What are the implications of these verses? Salvation is of God and not of man.

Also, God is sovereign and he alone decides who is and is not saved. He decides who receives eternal life and who does not. And in choosing, he does not in any way act unjustly or unfairly. Why? Because no one deserves salvation, no one deserves the grace of God. Grace by definition is unmerited. If some were deserving of God's salvation, it would no longer be an act of grace. It would place God in your debt, as if he owed certain people entrance into his heaven.

You might have some serious objections to this. You might have objections to this as a believer and you might have objections to this as a non-believer.

Let's address the believer first. Ask yourself. Why are you a Christian? Are you a Christian because you yourself decided one day, "Today I'm going to be a Christian"? Are you a Christian because you looked at the claims of Christianity and the evidences and proofs for Christianity and in your wisdom determined that this is the best and most logical course of action and so decided to believe in Christianity? Are you a Christian because your parents were Christian and their parents were Christian and that is why here today you too are also a Christian?

If you are a Christian on what basis are you one? What credit are you taking for you being a Christian? What contribution did you add that made you a Christian? The answer of course is none. No one can take any credit, no one made any contribution to their own salvation. We know that it was purely by sovereign grace and by sovereign grace we mean, by the sheer will and pleasure and decision and decree of God in eternity past, I am what I am. I am a Christian because God made me one. I am a Christian because God sent his Son. His sacrifice perfectly paid the penalty for my sin and his perfect life and obedience was credited to my account. That's why you and I are Christians. This is sovereign grace.

What about if you are a non-believer? Well first I dare you to try and believe. Try, right now to believe in Jesus, to love him, and forsake everything and follow him. Try to quit sin. Try to live the life of Christ. Try! You can't do it. It's impossible. You can't do it. No one can.

Then what should you do? You shouldn't throw your hands up and give up. You don't know if you are chosen by God. You don't when you might be chosen by him. It could be today, it could be next year. You just don't know, but it is too important not to make it your life's aim and priority. So, what can you do? "You say, Lord, I know I cannot choose you. I don't deserve to be chosen by you. I love my sin too much, but would you out of divine grace, would you please choose me? Would you give me faith to believe in your Son? Would you draw me to Jesus? Until he draws you, you should seek him. Don't let your heart rest, until you are certain he has called you.

Let's pray.