

July 3, 2022

“I Am the Bread”  
John 6:22-59

FCF: Our dependence is greater than we know

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) Jesus is the Bread of Life.

(magnet) He wants us to embrace this that we might live.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

When marine researchers lower robots down into the dark waters of the deep sea, they are constantly spotting things rare or previously unknown to science. There’s just so much down there. When astronomers peer into telescopes to gaze out into other galaxies, they are constantly discovering things previously unseen to science. There’s just so much out there. So very much.

The only right response to such discoveries is wonder - curiosity and humility. There is so much yet to know. Our knowledge is so much less than we thought. Which speaks to this - our dependence. Our dependence upon God is so much greater than we know. So very much.

Let’s consider the first of the metaphorical “I am” statements in John’s Gospel.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [John 6:22-59](#)

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

What is bread? Why does Jesus use this image to describe Himself? Our first thought might be to say, “Bread is food. It satisfies our hunger. It fills and fulfills us. And Jesus does that.” This would be partially true. But there’s more to it. Which takes us to the second thought, which requires us to read broad and go back. Reading broad means taking into account large passages at a time, going to the very beginning of John 6 and the feeding of the 5,000. Going back means taking into account the whole of the story, remembering the LORD’s care of Israel and His provision of manna in the wilderness. This was a key part of the exodus, God’s great work of delivering His people from bondage, bringing them out of centuries of slavery in Egypt.

The point being there is rich historical context to the passage we just read. The people partially grasp it. And Jesus intentionally taps into it. What do we learn in all this? Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Bread of Life. And He wants us to embrace this that we might live.

What would it mean to do that? We need to consider three things. First, the necessity of the bread. Second, the the provision of the bread. And then, third, our partaking of the bread.

**I. THE NECESSITY OF THIS BREAD**

First, the necessity of this bread. It is essential to life. Without it are dire consequences.

*A) Case Studies*

Consider some case studies of bread and its provision. We’ve touched on this already.

1. Recent memory

In the recent memory of the people, just a few days before on the other side of the lake, no food was to be found except five loaves and two fish. And Jesus multiplied it and then fed the masses.

2. Deeper memory

Pushing 1500 years before that, after the deliverance from Egypt came the complaints, “What will we eat? We’ll starve in this wilderness!” God kindly provided manna, bread from heaven.

*B) Greater Pattern*

But those incidents are really part of a greater pattern, the trend lines of the whole Bible.

1. The prophet Elisha

We see something of this with the prophet Elisha and his experience ([READ 2 Kings 4:42-44](#)).

2. The prayer passed down

No doubt this and other texts informed this ancient Jewish prayer ([READ](#)), “Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.” And then there are Jesus’ memorable words given in a model template prayer He passed on to us ([READ Matthew 6:11](#)).

The point being we repeatedly see in all this our great need, our absolute dependence.

*Illustration:*

This was brought home anew to me just last week. Sarah and I were walking our dogs and saw a baby bird, a hatchling just a few days old, lying on the side of the road. How it got there is something of a mystery but it was clearly orphaned. So I carried it home, kept it warm, and enlisted Emma’s help in feeding and transporting the little thing to a wildlife rehab center.

I’ve thought of that bird over the last few days - so vulnerable and such need. That’s me.

*Application:*

That’s me. That’s all of us. And that’s the first step in seeing Jesus as the Bread of Life. We have to recognize how dependent we are upon Him in every way - physically and spiritually.

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## **II. HIS PROVISION OF THE BREAD**

Which takes us to the provision of the bread. Over the course of this conversation, Jesus brings clarity to the confusion of the crowds - just as He did before with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman at the well. What does He say? He not only gives the bread. He is the bread.

*A) His Identity*

True bread. Note how Jesus clarifies His identity. It’s implicit in the phrasing of this “I am” statement, tied back to Moses and the burning bush. So who is He? ([READ John 6:33, 48](#))

1. Jesus’ words

The bread that came down from heaven - an allusion to but an expansion on the manna imagery.

2. The response

And the people get His meaning ([READ John 6:41-42](#)). They hear Him but cannot comprehend Him. The reality of His humanity and their rigid assumptions create a barrier to understanding.

*B) His Mission*

So, His identity. What of His mission? Why did Jesus come? ([READ John 6:33, 51](#))

1. To die

He came to die, to give this bread which is His flesh, His body and His life. This is the cross.

2. That we might live

He came to die. Why? That we might live. That we might have everlasting, ever deepening life.

This is the provision of the bread - who He is and why He came into this world.

*Application:*

We mustn't miss this. Jesus is saying, "I am not just another sage, prophet, or teacher. I am not just another healer, miracle worker, or revolutionary. I am not just another role model or example." All of that is true but none of it is the whole truth. Jesus came to give us Himself.

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### **III. OUR PARTAKING OF THE BREAD**

His work is truly life-giving. But how does it become ours? We have the necessity of the bread and its provision. But we must also consider our partaking of it. What does that mean?

*A) An Outlandish Assertion*

Let's start with what most that day felt to be an outlandish assertion (**READ John 6:35**).

1. Not merely intellectual

To "come to" and "believe in" is not just intellectual. It is based on facts but builds upon them.

2. But deeply relational

This is something deeply relational. It means a full on turning to, trusting in, and relying upon.

*Illustration:*

It's like making a hire, bringing someone onto your team, or even entering marriage. You are taking a step based on what you know. You can't have 100% certainty (just as in any of the great things of life) but you can take a real step based on what you do know. It's the same here.

*B) An Offensive Assurance*

Jesus says, "Believe in me" for your life. That alone was an outlandish assertion to make. But then came this offensive assurance. Try to feel the weight of it (**READ John 6:51-58**). Jesus knows this is going to throw them. But He presses the point in v.53, "Truly, truly I say to you..."

1. Not cannibalism

This was beyond confusing. It was revolting. Was Jesus speaking of cannibalism? Some cynics of the early Church took these words quite literally and it was part of the criticism they gave.

2. But true reliance

But that is not what Jesus meant. This eating and drinking has to do with an intimate reliance - not only a dining with but a dining upon. Jesus is not only the host but the meal. The One from whom we draw all our strength. Which means it is no mark of maturity to be perpetually relying upon ourselves while stopping in on Sundays for an occasional tuneup. No, what Jesus is calling for is ongoing continual reliance and dependence upon Him and His presence through His Spirit.

This is what it means to partake of the Living Bread. For He is our very life.

*Application:*

One way to think about this is in relation to this question. “What does it mean to be a Christian?” There are several good ways to answer this, phrases taken right from the Bible itself. It means we have sold all and bought the field. We have taken up our cross and are following Him daily. But it also means we have come to Him and believed in Him. And we are feeding on His flesh and drinking of His blood. We are abiding in Him and He in us. That’s what it means.

For Jesus is the Bread of Life. And He wants us to embrace this that we might live.

**CONCLUSION:**

As we move now to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, it’s worth asking, “Is John 6 and Jesus’ words of eating His flesh and drinking His blood a reference to the Lord’s Supper?” That’s a good question. Here’s the answer. No and yes. Note there is no explicit reference here to it. And the disciples couldn’t have heard Jesus teaching on a sacrament in that moment.

At the same time, what we read here conveys the same truth in words that this sacrament conveys in action. We are to come and believe. We are to come hungry and thirsty. We are to come turning to, trusting in, and relying upon Him. We are to eat and drink. And as we do, we find life. This is much of what Paul relays in 1 Corinthians ([READ 1 Corinthians 11:23-30](#)).

Like a meal, there is pictured here before us a continual need and supply. Who then should partake of this sacrament? Those who know this need, who have embraced Jesus’ supply, and who are striving - even if imperfectly - to live that out. If that’s not where you are today, if you are not a follower of Jesus, you ought not to do something with your body that is in conflict with your heart. But Paul would have us to understand something else - a professing Christian should let this go as well if they know themselves to be consciously living in disobedience to Jesus. It would be far better for us to let this check us, to repent, and to come back next time.

Jesus intends this time for our strengthening, for a time of remembrance and renewal.

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