

The True Bread of Heaven
John 6:22-34
Pastor Ty Blackburn
February 12, 2012

Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 6. This morning, we come to a scene which puts us on the day after two of Jesus' great miracles, two of the signs that John chooses to highlight in his gospel. You've seen as we've been working through this gospel, that John, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writing much later than the other apostles, shows more selectivity in his choice of miracles. He doesn't give us as many of the accounts of miracles as the other apostles did, and he does so with more of a pointed purpose, which he explains in the end of his book.

John 20:30-31 ~ And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

So two of the seven major miracles (or eight, depending on how you count them) happen in a 24-hour period. One is the feeding of the 5000, and the other is the miracle of Jesus walking on the water, which we looked at in previous weeks, and those two miracles set the stage for the discourse or the dialogue that's about to happen between Jesus and the crowds of Jewish people that have been absolutely taken by storm by these miracles. There's an enthusiasm and an excitement about the fact that Jesus may indeed be the Messiah, and there's a fervour that has been pulsating through the crowd and throughout the surrounding countryside, as we'll see in our text this morning, so that now even more people are coming to see this great miracle worker, and to see what God is doing.

In the midst of this great crowd of people seeking Jesus, an astonishing thing happens as we read through the account. Because we've read the story before, we're so prone to knowing how it ends, and so you miss the dramatic impact of it. But I think as you read it and try to read it from the beginning, like it's the first time you're reading it, there's an excitement that happens even as we as Christians look back on this and say, "Wow, look at all of the people coming to Jesus." Surely this is great, but what happens is Jesus basically, in this discourse from Verse 26 and all the way to the end of the chapter, for 30-some verses of dialogue, basically sifts the seekers, sifts the crowd, until there is only a small band of true disciples, so that the majority are not following. From the crowds that came, there is only a

remnant of true believers, and you see this irony that resonates with so much of the Old Testament, like the passage we read earlier from Psalm 78, where a multitude of people, millions of Jews, saw what God did in the wilderness. Millions of people saw the Sea divided. Millions of people saw God bring water from the rock. Millions of people ate the manna for 40 years, and yet millions of people died in their sins, failing to lay hold of God's salvation. So this passage recounts for us something of that same kind of tragic irony of people starving in the presence of plenty.

I'm going to read verses 22-34. Remember, this is just after the account of Jesus walking on the water in verses 15-21, and His feeding of the 5000, in verses 1-14.

John 6:22-34

22 The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. 23 There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate 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 small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. 25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." 30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" 32 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. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask now that You might give us the True Bread out of Heaven, that You might open our eyes and our hearts to see Jesus Christ and to truly love Him and serve Him more faithfully. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

It was the afternoon of April 5, 1976, at the Methodist Hospital in Houston, Texas, when a body was brought into the hospital there. The man's frame was 6'4" tall, and he weighed only 90 pounds. The large frame was not emaciated from cancer or some other disease, but the cause of death for this man was malnutrition and kidney failure. The kidney failure was apparently from drug addiction and from the effects of drugs, and the malnutrition was from not eating. This person was unrecognizable, so the FBI called in law enforcement forensic experts to do fingerprint analysis to verify that the 6'4", 90-pound man was indeed Howard Hughes, one of the wealthiest men alive, at the time of his death. He was a billionaire who had been a pioneer in aviation and aeronautics, an engineer, a man's man in that sense, a test pilot. He was one of the most successful men in American history, and yet he died largely because of malnutrition, starving in the presence of plenty.

That's really a picture of what our passage puts before us this morning, that we have, in the Jewish people encountering Jesus on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the town of Capernaum, in the dialogue, we have people who are starving spiritually, and who go away starving spiritually, and die, yet in the presence of the Bread of Life, offered freely and abundantly. And that's a sad picture of human history, because in reality, every person that dies and spends eternity in hell has been a recipient of the truth of God in extraordinary ways. Even the person that's never heard the Gospel has natural revelation testifying. Day after day it pours forth speech, night after night it speaks knowledge. There is no place where that word has not gone out, Psalm 19 tells us. There are also many who have heard the Gospel, and have heard the teachings of God's Word, and so the tragic irony is that there's something in man's heart that makes him turn away, though he's starving, from the one thing that he is starving for, and that is the living God, to know in truth the living God.

That's not a problem that just strikes the Jewish people. It's a problem that faces generations of Christians since the church was founded. It's an irony today in evangelicalism where there is so much teaching and so much writing. I did some research: During 1995, there were 55,000 Christian books published. During 2005, there were 178,000 Christian books published. That's the last figure I could find,

so now there are probably 200,000 books being published. And yet, what's the state of modern evangelicalism? Where is the holiness? Where is the character of God and the righteousness that should be there when people are truly partaking of Jesus Christ? I'm reminded of Paul's warning in 2 Timothy 3, about how in the last days, perilous times will come. Men will be lovers of self, lovers of everything but God. Verse 7 says: *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

Here in John 6, we have a stern warning to the Jewish people in that day, and to us today, to evangelicalism and its infatuation with spiritual things, but also for us in more Biblically conservative circles, even in Reformed circles like ours, we must avoid the perilous trap of starving in the presence of plenty—being around the things of God, being around the miracles of God, being around the power of God, yet not partaking and becoming one who knows the living God.

What I want us to do this morning, is we're going to have two major points, but the second point is where we're really going to camp out. For the first point, we want to look at the crowd, and secondly we want to listen to the warning. The warning of Jesus to the crowd is basically a four-point warning that we want to look at this morning. At least this section of it, we can break down into four points, because in the whole passage, He continues to expand on this theme, but in Verses 26-34, we have a four-point warning for the crowd. So we're going to look at the crowd and then listen to the warning.

First of all, what we have here is a crowd of seekers.

John 6:22 ~ The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one,...

John 6:24 ~ So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there,...

The New American Standard Bible translation is updated from time to time. Sometimes we like what they do and sometimes we don't. But previously, they used the word 'multitude' instead of the word 'crowd'. I like that better. It's still a multitude. It's not the great multitude that we're introduced to at the beginning of Chapter 6. The day before, it said 'a great multitude of people', which Scripture numbers at 5000 men, and we numbered to be at least 20,000 people, were fed by Jesus using two fish and five loaves. He feeds a multitude with just a small amount of food. It was a miracle. Basically, not creating ex nihilo, but multiplying—God multiplied bread and fish so that they all ate and were satisfied. At the end of the

day, this great multitude was wanting to make Him King, and Jesus supernaturally overcomes that and dismisses them. The other Gospel accounts of this story help to put the whole picture together. He dismisses the crowd after He sends the disciples away. And what we see here in Verse 22, is that the crowd has come back together expecting to find Jesus. They're in the same area where He gave them bread yesterday, which is the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee. That's where Jesus had fed the 5000. That crowd saw Him send the disciples away in a boat across the Sea of Galilee, from the northeast side to the northwest side, to Capernaum, which was Jesus' hometown or base of operation. He came from Nazareth, but His base of operation, His functional hometown during His ministry, was Capernaum on the northwest.

Basically, they're on one side of the Sea that Jesus was on yesterday, and Jesus' disciples had gone to the other side, and the crowd thinks Jesus must still be where He was, because they saw that there were only a couple of boats there, and now one boat had left with the disciples, and the other boat was still where it was. So therefore, they conclude that Jesus has to be around here somewhere, and so they're looking for Him. They are seeking Him. And what we find is that they realize, "Wait a minute. He's not here. He had gone away alone to pray, up the hill, and we can't find him. He must have somehow gotten over to Capernaum." So the text tells us in verse 23 that other small boats came from Tiberias across the Sea from the southern corner. Because what's happened is, people have heard about this miracle and there's a growing number of people who want to come see Him and possibly also, Tiberias being a largely Gentile area as well, there may be some folks who are trying to take advantage of the opportunity to come ferry some people to Capernaum. There's an opportunity to make some money. There are a lot of people on the other shore that need to get to Capernaum. So, these other boats come, they load up, and they take the crowd over to Capernaum. This takes some hours, but they get to Capernaum and they find Jesus, and we find out later that the dialogue happens in the synagogue, John tells us at the end of the chapter.

Their first question to Jesus is, "***Rabbi, when did You get here?***" in verse 25. They're basically saying, "When did You get here? How long have You been here? How did You get here? Did You walk around the shore? We thought we would have seen You. How did You get here?" So the text is careful to show us that this is Jesus' second miracle. He did the feeding of the 20,000 people publically. They all saw it. They all partook of it, but we noted last time that the walking on water, He reserved just for the twelve. He didn't show the multitude, though here we see that the multitude is on the verge of almost seeing that. And when I read the text again, trying to read it again with that mindset, it seems like in

Verse 25, when they say, “**Rabbi, when did You get here?**” that it’s a great opportunity for Jesus to say, “I walked on the water last night.” He could have done that, but the Lord hides that from them because He wants to deal with their hearts. The Lord could have done any miracle He wanted to. He could have walked across the ocean in the presence of the whole nation of Israel. He could have done what He’s going to do when He comes back and comes on the clouds with glory, so that every eye can see Him, but He chose not to do that because He wanted to address the real needs of the heart of man, and He knows that if He unveils His glory any wider for these people, they will not receive it. They’ll misuse it and abuse it to their own death. So He hides that from them, and He comes after their heart by asking them some questions, and by really challenging them by issuing to them a stern warning. It’s interesting that this crowd of seekers really isn’t seeking Jesus. That’s the irony. Twice we’re told they’re seeking.

John 6:26 ~ Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”

They’re seeking but they’re not seeking Him rightly. When I was in seminary, I had a lot of great classes, and then I had a couple of classes that weren’t so great. One of the classes that wasn’t so great was a class on church growth. It sounds like a good class and a good topic, but in 1990 (that’s how long ago I was in seminary), they were teaching this philosophy of church growth, and it was about how you grow your churches. That should be a good thing. We just sang a song ‘We Long to See Your Churches Filled’. It’s good to long to see God’s churches filled when it’s people celebrating His glory, but this was about church growth, yet it was a very man-centered, worldly approach to how you make your church grow. And the philosophy of the church growth movement is basically whatever you can do to draw a crowd, that’s good. And if you draw the crowd and you keep it entertained, then somewhere along the way they get saved. That was the best motivated church growth philosophy, basically. They taught all kinds of principles about how you build your church. If you want to grow a church, you do this and that, and it was all from sociology and psychology studies.

I remember in hearing it, thankfully the Lord helped me not to get caught up in it. I thought, “Wow, it seems like Jesus would have failed this church growth class,” because I thought about John 6. What He does in this class is not keep the crowd excited and upbeat so that hopefully somehow by osmosis they’ll come to believe. What He does is He confronts the crowd and drives the crowd away even. Now true, He had done the feeding of the 5000. There’s a place for us meeting real

needs and there's a place for reaching out and displaying glory, but there's also a place for when someone is interested, going for the heart, and that's what Jesus does. He issues a stern warning – a four-point warning.

Let's listen to this warning now. We've looked at the crowd, and now we're going to listen to the warning. The first part of the warning is Verse 26. Jesus basically asked this question: What is your motive? He challenges the motive of the seekers. If we really understand scripture rightly, we know that the Bible says that there are none who seek for God, not even one. I like how R.C. Sproul defines it. He says, "People do seek for the benefits of God." There are lots of seekers who are seeking the benefits of God. Think about this in light of this chapter. They're seeking the benefits of God, but no one seeks God, because we do not want God. The essence of sin is that we want our own way. We don't want to submit, we don't want to worship, we don't want to honor Him, and we don't want to surrender. We would like the benefits of God, but we don't want God Himself. If you doubt that, read Romans 3:10-18 and meditate on it, because that's what Paul is making abundantly clear, and that's the first part of the Gospel. The way of salvation is first of all you have to realize how lost you are and how far you are from God. So, the people really aren't genuine seekers, and Jesus begins to sift the seekers by asking about their motive.

John 6:26 ~ Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."

We need to ask ourselves: What is our motive or purpose in seeking Spiritual things? When we engage ourselves in Spiritual exercises like worship, hearing God's Word, Bible study, reading, studying, meditating, and memorizing, what is our motive? What really are we seeking after? The crowds were seeking after some kind of superficial fulfillment. He says, "***You seek Me, not because you saw signs,...***" The fact is they see signs, but they didn't really see them. There's kind of a word play going on. Some translations are better than others. In Verse 26, ***not because you saw signs*** echoes what they saw earlier.

John 6:22 ~ The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one,...

John 6:24 ~ So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there,...

The idea is they've even begun to see the second miracle though they weren't there. It seems like they saw that there was no other small boat there, they saw that Jesus is not there, they're about to put it together, and then Jesus says, "No, but you didn't really see signs. Though you saw signs, you didn't see signs. Though you're a seeker, you're not seeking. Though you were seeing, you're really not seeing. You saw miracles, but they weren't signs for you."

What is a sign? There's a key word in the Gospel of John. I mentioned earlier that the purpose statement in John is that many other signs did Jesus do in the presence of His disciples (John 20:30). If they were written down, there wouldn't be enough books to hold them. But these are written. These signs. The word sign means 'a token', an authenticating mark, something that proves the genuineness of something, something that calls you from the token to the reality. So Jesus' miracles were not in themselves to be enjoyed. They were to bring people beyond the sign to Himself. But what happened is the people were getting infatuated with the sign itself and not what the sign pointed to. So in that way, they really weren't interested in signs that would point them to Him, they were interested in wonders. To them, Jesus was a miracle worker. He had power that they then could use for themselves. They weren't really wanting to come all the way and partake of who He is and really face who He is and what it would mean to them. If you see Him as He is, you must see Him from your knees, and they didn't want that.

It's amazing the irony of that. The sign is designed to pull them to Him, and yet they see the sign and can celebrate the sign without partaking of Him. It's almost like you're really hungry and you go out to eat today or this week, and you're saying, "I'm so hungry." And you know the menus that we have at various places, how almost all of them have pictures on them now. That's why they take the menus away once you make your order. It never looks like what you ordered when it gets there! "This is not what I ordered." Imagine that you're hungry and you go look at the menu. There is some satisfaction at looking at what's coming, but imagine that you went and looked at the menu, and you thought how great that picture is, and then you looked at all the pictures, and then you got up and you left, and you said, "Man, that was satisfying. Those pictures were great. You need to go to that restaurant." That's absurd, isn't it? But that's really what they were doing. They were partakers of the signs. They were seeing the sign but not seeing the sign. They weren't partaking of Christ. They weren't moving beyond the menu to really enjoy the meal.

So the question is: When you come to Spiritual things like Bible reading, like worship services, like personal and corporate prayer time, what is it that you're

seeking? Are you seeking to really commune with and to experience in a real way the risen Christ? Am I wanting to know Jesus at this moment? Is that what my motive is? Or am I going to be content to sort of be titillated but not partake? Jesus is saying, “You guys want to be just filled with the bread, but the bread is not what it was about. The bread was a pointer to the fact that I am the Bread. The bread was a pointer to the fact that you are starving to death, not physically, but spiritually, and that I am the only thing that will satisfy the longings of your heart.” The bread was just a picture on the menu. It wasn’t the meal. We each need to beware of being engaged in Spiritual things without really wanting to know the Lord. There’s a deadening quality of that.

I was warned about something before I went to seminary, and have often reflected on this because it remains a peril for anybody that teaches the Bible regularly—for Sunday school teachers, and even for parents—as we teach the Bible scripture to our children, but a wise pastor told me when I was getting ready to go to seminary, “Beware of the dryness of seminary.” As somebody on the front end, getting ready to go, I couldn’t imagine how it could be dry. I was thinking, “I’m going away to study for three years, to study the Bible! To study theology! To study Hebrew and Greek! Man, this is going to be a mountaintop experience. This is going to be like drinking from a fire hydrant.” He said, “No, it can be dry.” I said, “Why? What do you mean? How can that be?” He said, “Well, there is something about handling the Holy things of God for academic purposes, that can deaden your soul—to look at the things of God but not to be *communing* with God. You see, I’m studying this passage so I can take a test on it, rather than studying this passage so that I might partake of Christ.” Jesus said to the crowd, “You’re seeking for the wrong reasons. You’ve gotten infatuated with the pleasure of the experience.” This is so common today. The fact that you can sell 200,000 Christian books, the fact that when you go into the Christian bookstores, it is depressing, isn’t it, to see what the main sellers are? That’s what we’re teaching on in the Sunday morning Bible study right now, about the books that have kind of taken evangelicalism by storm that really have serious, serious problems, and how they are killing people spiritually, or hurting them, hindering them dramatically, at best. What is it though? There is some infatuation we have with novelty, with something new, and the experience of it. Is Christ not enough? If Jesus is enough, then that will affect everything, even the way we read the Bible. Just give me some verses of scripture. I can feed on that.

It’s such a joy to minister among people who love Christ and love the Word. I often think about talking to young ministers now. Seeing them having been taught how to spin the plates, or to juggle spiritually, so they can entertain the crowd, I’d

like to say, “Look, man, that’s not the way to do it.” First of all, it’s really tiring to spin plates and juggle at the same time, and do a tap dance, you know? It’s hard work to dig into the Word, but if you will do that, you will cultivate in your people a taste for the scripture, and then you’ll be amazed. And this is what I’ve learned is sometimes I’ve felt like I’ve done the poorest job in preaching, and yet people will still benefit from it. A few weeks ago, I told Patti, “I really struggled today,” and later in the week, she says that a couple of people had talked about the sermon, and you know what it is? It is just that because people have learned to feed on the Word of God and really want Christ, then if you give them a little bit, they can really... It’s like a meal that’s not exactly perfect, but it’s got good stuff there. Good ingredients. You can’t mess it up. You can do a lot to mess it up, but you can’t really, ultimately mess it up.

The Lord’s way is the best way. Jesus is saying, “You’re seeking Me not for the right reasons. You need to be seeking Me to know Me, not to be titillated or to be entertained.” That’s the first warning: Check your motive.

The second thing Jesus does is He challenges their mindset in Verse 27. It’s closely related to the first warning, but slightly different:

John 6:27 ~ Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”

He’s saying, “What are you living for? What is your mindset? What are you about?” He says, “The problem is you’re about the wrong things. You’re about the food which perishes. Do not work for that, do not labor for that, do not toil for the food which perishes. But rather, give yourself to laboring for the food which is eternal and endures forever.” What we see is that when the Lord has worked in our hearts to open our eyes to see that—*my greatest need is not my physical need, it’s not my emotional need, but it’s my spiritual need. I am destitute before God and I need His grace, His salvation, and seek Christ for that*—then everything comes into order, and one of the things that happens in the mind of one who God is working to truly make him a true seeker, a genuine seeker, is that there is a movement. There is a paradigm shift as it were, so that what becomes more and more important are eternal things, and what is less and less important are the things of this world.

Conversion really is that paradigm shift, where suddenly our eyes are open and now what matters is eternity. You can see it. It’s not about this world. It’s about

eternity. Eternity is real and becomes real to the person who has had their eyes open. So Jesus is pleading with the people, trying to open their eyes, trying to get them to look to God. They're looking at all the wrong things. Their mind is set on the things of this world, the things which are going to pass away. As Jesus said in Matthew 6, "Don't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven." The best that this world has is corruptible and is going to go away. Isn't it true? It's something that we see. The longer you live, the more you see that be reality. You see it in yourself when you look in the mirror. You feel it in your joints when you get up and you put your feet on the floor, after you turn 40, I think. At least that's about the time it happened for me. This body is wasting away. The things that we have that we think are nice, moth and rust can corrupt. Thieves can break in and steal. When you lay up treasures in Heaven, they are incorruptible, undefiled, and they fade not away. Why would we live for this short life, that if we are granted grace and we live to be 80 or 90, it's still, according to scripture, a breath. This morning, for the first time in a long time, this winter, you could breathe and see your breath. Exhale, and you see that mist and then it's gone. That is your life and my life. This life is gone so quickly. Live for eternity.

The mindset is it's not about this world, and when you have that mindset, then suddenly the problems that come, if I'm thinking from an internal mindset, the weight of trials, the difficulties that come, if we see that God has changing us, fitting us, making us more like Christ, then the mindset is radically different. It's not about relief. I mean sometimes when we're in pain, we have a desire for relief. But it's this movement in our hearts. There's a paradigm shift, and then there's a progression in growth in this. If we're born again, we ought to be moving and progressing over time, and wanting eternity more, and wanting the things of this world less. We ought to be seeing that, and we ought to be disciplining ourselves in the scripture. If you don't discipline yourself, then you're not going to be godly according to 1 Timothy 4:7. But if the spirit of God is in you, He's going to keep working on you and He will discipline you so that you get back on track. But Jesus is saying to the Jews, "The reason that you're starving is that your mind is set on the things of this world, and you need to give yourself to eternal things which the Son of man will give to you." So He asks them to check their motive. He challenges their mindset, and then He asks them to reconsider their method.

He'd introduced the word 'work': ***Do not work for the food which perishes...*** The method really gets down to: How are you going to lay hold of eternal things? Jesus doesn't just tell them they have a problem wherein they're not looking for

eternal things, but He actually now deals with *how* they lay hold of eternal things. That's why He says, "Reconsider your method," the third word of warning.

In Verse 27, He said: *Do not work for the food which perishes...* He had basically given them the answer. *Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you...* But they missed the point. We see in Verse 28, that they latched onto the word 'work'.

John 6:28 ~ Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

And you have really this contrast between working and believing.

John 6:29 ~ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

Do you want to know what work you need to work so that you can partake of eternal things and you can become a child of God? ***This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.*** The work is to believe. The only work that you need to do to lay hold of the things of God, is to truly believe. Here again, we have that New Testament dichotomy between working and faith. How is a man justified? Paul says:

Romans 3:28 ~ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

By faith in Christ. It's not what we do. It's not our works. It's faith. But faith is not an easy believism kind of thing. Faith is an all-out trusting of oneself upon Christ. Faith consists of three things, basically:

Knowledge - you have to know the Gospel. You have to know the truths of the Gospel. You have to know that I'm a sinner. To know that the Bible says not only am I a sinner, but I'm an object of wrath. I deserve God's wrath. I have to know that cognitively. Then I have to know that Jesus Christ came into the world to be the Savior of sinners like me, and that He offered Himself at Calvary for the sins of everyone who would ever believe. They were placed upon Him, and He was treated as if He had lived the life of every unbeliever who would be saved. He was treated as if He had lived all of our sins. He was punished by God. He experienced the wrath of God on the cross. He experienced the reality of hell on the cross. Then

He was placed in the tomb, dead. On the third day, He rose again from the dead. You have to know those facts. But you can't just merely have knowledge of those facts.

The second thing you have to have in saving faith is ascent. Ascent means you don't merely just know those facts, you ascent to them. There are unbelievers who know the Gospel and know what it means. They know what we believe and they we're fools. They think it's all foolishness, because the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us, it's the power of God. So, we have to ascent to these truths. We have to accept them with our minds and say, "Yes, that is true," but true biblical faith is not just knowledge and ascent. It's not just a mere human, intellectual approval that these things are true. True saving faith is trusting. I know these things; I know the facts of the Gospel. I know what God has said in His Word. I ascent to it, but I put my trust in a personal way in the Christ of the Gospel. It's not just knowing and accepting, but it is trusting in—and not just trusting in the Gospel in a personal way, but trusting in Christ Himself. It is a going to Jesus, a going out of myself, and resting myself upon Christ. That is the method. That is what Jesus says. What are you to do? ***This is the work of God, that you believe in Him...*** You place yourself in Him, on Him—by faith.

Faith is not a work. I love how Luther defined faith.

Faith is the empty outstretched hand of a beggar, reaching out to the one who can save.

All of my hope is in You, Jesus. I accept what Your Word says. I see that You are the Bread of Life. Please, fill me. So that's the method. It's not works. It's faith in Jesus helping these blind seekers who are really not seeking. To open the eyes of some, He challenges their method. Not just their motive, and their mindset, and their method, but lastly, He calls them to a different mission. If you truly follow God, if you truly had your heart open to the things of God, you'd have something new that you seek. Your motive is to seek Him. Your mindset is eternal things. Your method is faith. In Verses 30-34, we see the crowd then ask a question that prompts some more revelation by Jesus.

Verse 30: So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?"

Irony. They haven't really understood the signs, but they're asking for a sign.

Verse 31: *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, **'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'***”

Basically they're saying, "We've got an idea for a sign that You can do. Give us some more bread." They totally missed the point of all that He said. He's saying, "You came because you wanted to have your bellies filled." And they're saying, "Yes, that's right." But there's something even beyond that going on here. They want their bellies filled, but they also want a Messiah that they can manipulate, just like they wanted to take Him and make Him King. I think they're really wrestling with the idea that He really could be the Messiah, but they understand that in a very man-centered way, not a God-centered way. They wanted Him to declare Himself to be Messiah right now, right here. I think it's just something of a challenge. Because it was common in 1st Century Judaism—we have the writings of the Rabbis that say that they expected that the Messiah would also bring manna from Heaven—that the second redeemer, that would be the Messiah, the last redeemer would be like the first redeemer. Who was the first redeemer to the Jews? Moses. They quote scripture here, and say in Verse 31, **'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'**” Though, in its context in scripture, that's talking about how God gave them bread out of heaven to eat, I think Jesus' response shows that they're thinking of it as Moses giving the people bread out of Heaven, and if You are the second redeemer, the last redeemer, then give us bread out of Heaven like Moses. So we're wondering, "Are You as great as Moses? We think You might be. We're willing to put it to the test." They're so big. "So, do that miracle. Give us bread out of Heaven just like Moses did."

Verse 32: *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.***

Verse 33: *For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."*

He uses that formula: ...**"Truly, truly, I say to you,**... again. "I tell you the truth. Listen to what I'm saying. What I'm saying is challenging to you. You think in categories that are totally different. Listen up." That's what he's saying to the crowd. In the Greek, what it really says is: **"Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses...** Those are the first words in the sentence that came out of Jesus' mouth after He said ...**"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.**

“So, first of all, let’s correct the fact that Moses didn’t give you anything. God gave it to you. My Father. But even what the Lord gave you back then, under the dispensation of Moses, was not the True Bread. It was only a type. It wasn’t the real thing. Don’t you understand? The True Bread is what you have before you right now.” He’s basically saying that the manna was always intended by God merely as a type.

In fact, this passage itself is one of those passages that legitimizes a careful reading of the Old Testament, which we try to do on our Wednesday nights where we’re going through the books of the Bible. I’ve been struck by this, that it’s amazing how, as you read through the scripture and you’re looking for Jesus in the Old Testament, you find Him everywhere. Now sometimes people get carried away and they find Him where He’s not, and I have some brothers in Christ who have encouraged me as I’ve fellowshiped with pastors from time to time. I have guys that come from a more dispensational background, and I’m kind of a mixture of dispensational, covenant, theologian. If you don’t know those terms, don’t even worry about it. If you do, okay. John MacArthur says he’s a ‘leaky dispensationalist’. I’m a ‘leaky covenantalist’ and a ‘leaky dispensationalist’ kind of blended together.

But dispensationalists have challenged me saying, “You need to be careful about that typology in the Old Testament. The only time you should see a type is when the New Testament clearly shows you that.” I believe that’s wrong. If you read the Old Testament carefully, and you read it in its context, and you read it thinking about authorial intention, you can see Christ everywhere. The biggest proof text is Luke 24, where Jesus takes the disciples on the road to Emmaus and takes them through the whole Bible and shows them how it all talks about Him.

This passage is doing the same thing. It’s showing them that manna was never really meant to be manna. That wasn’t its main point. Manna was meant to show them out in the midst of the wilderness, with the barrenness that this world was for the people of Israel, that they have no food, and they need the Bread of God. Not physically, but Spiritually. Manna was a teaching tool. So much of the Old Testament is filled with these kinds of teaching tools. The True Bread was always Jesus. Manna was the menu. It was the picture on the menu. It may not have been as impressive as some pictures on menus as we would think, but if you stop and step back from it for a minute, you’d think, “Well, I wouldn’t want to have manna every day.” That’s what the Jews said. That was a wicked thing for them to think, because they should have been thinking, “Isn’t it amazing that God fed us for 40 years? Millions of people! We’ve been fed out of Heaven. Day after day.” If they

had a right heart, that would have the best food every day that you could have eaten. Better than Thanksgiving dinner. That's saying something right there. I'd rather have manna, because this is the hand of God that has given it to us.

But even though it's that good, that's nothing compared to what it represents. It represents Christ. Our lives are a barren wilderness. We are barren because we don't know God. We are in the dark. We are empty. There is nothing good growing in us. All that comes out of us is evil. What we need in the barren wilderness of our lives is Christ. We need the One who makes us righteous, the One who makes us holy, the One who gave Himself for us and gives Himself to us. That's what we need. That's what Jesus is saying. "Look, the manna was nothing. Moses is nothing, relatively speaking. I'm telling you, it's all about Me." That's what Jesus is saying, and He's right. He is right.

As a matter of fact, there is a great section in John Stott's book Basic Christianity, where he points out that Jesus is unique among all men who have ever lived in this. His teaching is extremely self-centered. It kind of rubs you wrong when you first hear it, doesn't it? But if you think about it, it's exactly right. Every great prophet of the Old Testament always said, "It's not me, it's Him. It's not me, it's Him. He's coming." John the Baptist said, "It's not me, it's Him. He's behind me." Jesus says, "I AM. I am the One." And God the Father set His seal on it—at the baptism, but also at the Mount of Transfiguration. What happened on the Mount of Transfiguration? The disciples there have fallen asleep. They wake up, Jesus is standing up on the hillside, and there are Moses and Elijah. Somehow they recognize that's Moses and Elijah. Jesus' glory was shining out. Apparently the glory dies down enough where Peter is able to speak, and terrified he says, "Lord, it's good for us to be here," because he knows the Old Testament, that you can't see God and live. "It's good for us to be here." In other words, "Don't kill us." "It's good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Who are Moses and Elijah? Moses is the great first prophet. Elijah is the great prophet of the latter half of the Old Testament. He's the covenant prosecutor. They are the two great prophets. They are the two great pinnacles. "Let me make a tabernacle for You, a tabernacle for Moses, and a tabernacle for Elijah." Jesus doesn't have to answer because the Father answers. This is one of those times where God says, "I'm going to straighten this mess out right now," and He speaks out of Heaven. He says, "This is my Son whom I love with whom I'm well-pleased. Listen to Him." What He's saying is, "Forget Moses. Forget Elijah. It's all about Jesus. He is the answer. He is the One. He is the full revelation. He is the True Bread out of Heaven, so that every other bread that you ever had is nothing. He's the true light."

“He is the true light,” John began with in John 1:9, when he talked about John the Baptist coming. He said, “Then the true light, which enlightens every man has come. The true, the authentic, the ultimate. There were other lights, but compared to Jesus they are nothing. It’s all about Christ.”

If we have understood the warning and we have heeded it, if our motive is to seek His face and to seek His fellowship, if our mindset is eternal things and our method is faith, then our mission as Christians is that He might have the pre-eminence, that in everything, Jesus Christ might come to have first place, so that no matter what is happening, what I want now is for Jesus to be exalted. There is a paradigm shift that happens in our heart where we want this suddenly. That’s regeneration. Suddenly we want that, but we find that our flesh fights against it. Daily we battle with the desire to be Lord ourselves, to be about our own business. It’s the scripture, it’s staying in the Word, it’s praying, it’s fellowshiping together, that keeps putting to death the old things and keeps saying, like Paul said, “For me to live is Christ. To breathe a breath is to lift up Jesus Christ.” That’s what eternity is all about. If you have an eternal mindset, then think about Heaven. Think about the fact that in Heaven you’re going to be seeing the glory of Jesus, drinking in the wonder of all that He is for all eternity. It will only get sweeter, and more wonderful, and more precious, and our business is going to be to praise Him, and to honor Him, and to enjoy Him forever.

That is what has to happen in the heart. Is that what is happening in you? Can you say, “God is doing that work in me”? If not, then cry out to Him and ask Him, “Lord, I don’t want to be starving in the face of so much that can satisfy my soul. Don’t let me, Lord. Open my eyes that I can see. Give me ears to hear. Let me be about making Jesus everything because He’s worthy.” Let’s pray together.

Our Father,

We bow before You and we praise You for giving us the True Bread out of Heaven. Lord, we turned away from You in the rebelliousness of our hearts. We saw Your glory, the light of Your glory. We turned away and we worshiped other things: ourselves, images, in the likeness of man and the likeness of creatures. We are by nature idolaters, and yet You, in Your great mercy are able to make us alive in Christ.

Father, give us more and more the reality of that life. We pray for those in this room who do not yet know Jesus personally, who have not yet truly become partakers of Christ. Help them to look to You, and in true faith, open their hearts

and open their mouths that You might fill them. We know and we testify that nothing satisfies in this world and nothing meets the needs of our souls except Jesus. Lord, we pray that You would help us who know You, to not be so distracted and not be so forgetful, but to make it our business every day to feed on the Bread of Heaven, knowing Christ and making Him known. Lord, let this be our business. Let this be our mindset. Let this be our mission every moment of every day: To know Him and to make Him known. We pray this for Your glory and for Your honor.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.