

Series: The Gospel of John

Day 6: Believe and eat the Bread of life and live forever

Prayer

O God,
You have already invited us to just look up and believe. You have offered us all the Living Water. Your mighty voice has already called us to rise from death to life. Thank you for those who already believe and live!

But Lord, there are still those who hear these words, but they want to abuse it for their own power. Others want to use it for their own gain. Others want to do things to get Your approval. O God, they do not yet see or drink or hear You. Feed them now with the Bread of Life.

Amen

Introduction

We are busy with the Gospel of John and our aim is to do 21 devotions covering the 21. We are at chapter 6 and today we will look at the Bread of Life.

The first five days...

In the first five days we have been invited to look at the cross and believe, to drink living water and believe and to hear the mighty voice of God and believe. And today we are invited to eat the living Bread and believe.

John 6

I will start at verse 12. Some background: A lot of people – 5000 - are gathered together. They are hungry. There are 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. God prays and he says hand out. Then it says in verse 12:

12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples,

*“Gather up the leftover fragments,
that nothing may be lost.”*

13 So they gathered them up

*and filled **twelve** baskets with fragments from the five **barley loaves**
left by those who had eaten.*

*14 When the people saw the **sign** that he had done, they said,*

“This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

You will remember when I explained why John wrote this gospel, he told us in chapter 20 that he writes about these signs that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing may have life. This is what happens here, there is a sign, people see it and they say that He is the Prophet that needed to come to this world. Like yesterday, in chapter 5, where we already saw the miracle in verse 9 but the chapter continued and took us to a pinnacle, we see the miracle in verse 12, but the chapter has 71 verses. But unlike

chapter 5 it doesn't lead us up to a pinnacle, but takes us down to a valley. Let us take big steps through this chapter. Verse 15 says:

15 Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

They see this miracle. They see He is the one who had to come to this world. But they don't see Him as saviour. They see Him as outcome for the oppression of the Romans. They see Him for their own abuse of power. He realises this and goes to the mountain. When He goes to the mountain alone, He goes to pray. He goes up while the rest of this chapter goes down.

We jump to verse 26. What happened in the part I skipped, is that Jesus and the disciples went over to the other side of the sea. When the people woke up the next day, they started looking for Him but couldn't find Him. They got in their boats and went over to the other side, so He says to them:

26 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

They want this bread for selfish gain, for their own benefit and the previous day to become king, for own power. Here he says because you ate and became satisfied, you are seeking it for your own gain.

28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"

29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

He tells them exactly what John wants us to understand in this gospel: You need to see the miracles and not use it for your own power and gain or do things to earn it, no, you just need to believe. I am the one who was sent, I am the saviour, just believe in Me.

30 So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, 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 from heaven to eat.'"

One can hardly believe it, just the previous day they saw how Jesus multiplied the bread and the fish, now they ask for a sign. As if they didn't see that at all. They want more, more

sensation. They are raising the bar and say Moses gave us manna from heaven, what are you going to do today?

32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you,
it was not Moses who gave you the *bread from heaven*...

Then in the next few verses He explains to them that it is God who gave the manna. But God does so much more, He sends Jesus Christ as the bread from heaven. And then we see how it goes down the mountain even more. The way they react to this message of living bread from heaven...

41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said,
"I am *the bread that came down from heaven.*"

They receive the Gospel, they don't see it and they don't understand it and they start to grumble. Then the Lord explains the whole gospel to them in three verses:

49 Your fathers ate the *manna* in the wilderness,
and they died.

50 This is the *bread*
that comes down from heaven,
so that one may *eat* of it
and not die.

51 I am the *living bread that came down from heaven.*
If anyone *eats* of this *bread,*
he will *live forever.*
And the *bread* that I will give
for *the life* of the world
is my flesh."

49 Your fathers ate the *manna* in the wilderness,

The manna you said was a miracle, they ate it...

and they died.

50 This is the *bread*

Here in front of you is the bread, I am not going to do another sign. The sign is standing right in front of you. This is the bread...

that comes down from heaven,
so that

Why? Why did this bread come down from heaven? So that..

one may *eat* of it
and not die.

It is not just bread, but living bread...

51 *I am the living bread that came down from heaven.*

*If anyone eats of this bread,
he will live forever.*

*And the bread that I will give
for the life of the world
is my flesh."*

The bread I am going to give is my flesh – I will die on the cross for you. I give it to you so that you may live forever. And that is the whole gospel. Will they believe it?

52 *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying,
"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*

They don't see yet. They don't understand it yet. We saw it with Nikodemus when he asked how he can return to his mother's womb, we saw it with the lady at the well, she asked how Jesus could give her living water without a bucket. They ask how He can give them His body to eat? How can that be? But Jesus doesn't allow himself to be bothered by them and He just goes on with the Gospel and He knows that blood is something that makes them unclean. He tells them not only will they eat His body, they will drink His blood to live eternally.

54 *Whoever feeds on my flesh
and drinks my blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him up on the last day.*

55 *For my flesh is true food,
and my blood is true drink*

And then this is too much for them. We go further down the mountain.

66 *After this many of his disciples turned back
and no longer walked with him.*

The 5000 becomes less and less.

67 *So Jesus said to the twelve,*

From 5000 to 12. Everyone saw the sign, but they don't believe. Only 12 are left. And Jesus says to them:

"Do you want to go away as well?"

68 *Simon Peter answered him,
"Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words*

*of eternal life,
69 and we have believed, and have come to know,
that you are the Holy One of God.”*

Here happens what John explains to us: They saw the signs, and know Jesus is the son of God, they believe and know He is the Holy one and they have eternal life. These twelve saw the sign, believed and will live. The 5000 saw it, but wanted to use it for their own gain and power and they walk away. But this is not the end. There are two more verses that takes us down to the valley.

*70 Jesus answered them,
“Did I not choose you, the twelve?
And yet one of you is a devil.”*

*71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot,
for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.*

5000, 12, 11 left. Only 11. And on this low point this chapter ends. Unbelievable miracle and only 11 left. Did Satan win? Did he prevent the Gospel from spreading? No. God was in control. In this chapter it also says only those who God calls will come to Him. And this verse is written here to show that Jesus knows these things ahead of time. Judas didn't betray Him yet, but He knows it is coming. He knows exactly what is going to happen, He knew these people would leave. To increase the faith of His disciples He did something in the beginning of this chapter. He did it that Peter may realize when everyone is down in the valley that the only answer is Jesus Christ. Let us go back and read that part. Just after the multiplication of the bread we read:

*16 When evening came,
his disciples went down to the sea,
17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum.*

Here we see three things about the circumstances they are in:

*It was now dark,
and Jesus had not yet come to them.
18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.*

After the pinnacle of this miracle they are in the dark, they are alone without Jesus and the sea around them is rough. They are at a low point. Then it is written:

19 When they had rowed about three or four miles,

To emphasize they are in the middle of the sea, far from shore, alone in rough waters.

they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat,

They see another miracle – Jesus walks on the sea. Will they do what John says? See and believe? No...

and they *were frightened*.

20 But he said to them, *"It is I; do not be afraid."*

21 Then they were *glad to take him into the boat,*

They saw and believed.

and *immediately*

the boat *was at the land to which they were going.*

Another miracle. When He got into the boat in the middle of the sea the boat immediately was in the harbour. Unbelievable! This miracle caused the disciples to still say You are the Son of God at such a low point at the end of this chapter. Because this sign was only done in front of them. If we read further, the next day when people see Him on the other side, they ask Him how He got there. But He doesn't tell them about the miracle, He just asks them if they are looking for Him because they want more bread? This miracle was only done for the disciples to strengthen them.

I don't think it was by chance that 12 baskets of bread were left – there are 12 disciples. One of the other Gospels says Jesus broke the bread and gave it to the disciples to distribute. There wasn't enough for the disciples, but Jesus says take it and hand it out, share the Gospel. The people might leave, they might not believe, but that is not your concern. Hand out the bread and don't worry if you give it all away, because for each of you there is a basket with left overs. And when you are on the sea and it is dark and you feel that I am not there and everything goes wrong and no one believes the gospel, the seas are rough, know, if you invite me to climb into your boat that boat will immediately be in the harbour. And the people I call, will pray to me and they will immediately be in the safe harbour.

Let us conclude:

Today's chapter unfolded in five points:

1. We saw the miracle ended with:

So they ... filled *twelve* baskets with fragments

And we thought the people believed when we heard:

This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!

But then we saw they wanted to use it for their own gain:

And [they wanted to] take him by force to make him *king*

2. Jesus then calls them to true faith

You are seeking me... because *you ate your fill*

What must we do?

Believe in him whom he has sent

3. And when they tried to point to the miracle of manna, He gives them the Gospel of the Bread of life:

It was not Moses who gave you the *bread from heaven*

I am the bread that came down from heaven
If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

4. But sadly we saw only eleven truly believed:

Many of his disciples turned back...

Lord, to whom shall we go?

And yet one of you is a devil

5. Those were the ones who gladly took Him into their boat:

The sea became rough

they were glad to take him into the boat,

immediately the boat was at the land

1. The crowd wanted to use the miracle for own gain
2. But the purpose was true believe in him whom he has sent
3. He sent the Bread of life and those who eat will live forever.
4. They will confess: Lord, to whom shall we go?
5. and immediately their boat will be in the safe harbour

So, our theme for today

Believe and eat,

the Bread of life,

and live forever

Reflection

Today's passage is again filled with so many things to learn of God, the Father and the Son. Take some time and read the passages again and write down the glorious things you learned. What are the implications for you? Are you walking away or are you safely in the harbour, fully satisfied with a full basket of leftovers from His miracle?

Thanksgiving

When you reflect what you wrote down, what thoughts of gratitude is the Holy Spirit stirring up in your heart? Where to does it want to overflow? Write down one, very specific, thing that you are going to do differently during today.

Prayer

I will start with a short prayer and when I say Amen, you can continue praying as the Spirit guides you:

Lord, the world is a terrible storm around us, it's dark around us. Many people feel that You are not with them. Yes, Lord the storm rages around us. When we, a hand full of believers, see how masses of people are doing everything for their own gain and their own honour in these times, we are deeply concerned. Lord instead of believing in Your message, they start groaning and then arguing and finally they simply walk away from You.

Lord it sometimes feels like our ministry is not making an impact, but then we know You are the one who changes hearts. Thank You for Your message of encouragement to believers today. Help us not to keep the 5 loaves that You give us for ourselves, but to hand them out, because we know You will take care of us - 12 baskets full! You will multiply the 5 loaves and feed them with the Bread of Life. For You are the heavenly Bread that gives eternal life. Thank you for already filling us with it.

Therefore, we agree with Peter: Lord, to whom shall we go in times like these? We firmly believe and we know that You are the Holy One of God. But Lord, I pray so especially for those who have not yet been able to taste this Bread. Let them see You coming, walking on water to their sinking boat. Make them willing to invite you into the boat. For Lord, immediately, at that moment, even though the storm is raging, they are safe in Your harbour. Lord I know there is someone listening now who is going to pray this from You soon and I know you will answer that prayer!

Amen