

## ***Becoming God-Sustained***

Jesus is the Bread of Life

### **John Series – Part 5**

John 6:22-59

July 17-18, 2021

#### **Introduction**

- **There are two primary aches in the spirits of mankind:** 1.) the desire to be filled with good things; 2.) the desire to control our destiny. We want to feel good and we want to be in charge. It's what drives our choices and our religions.
- **The problem is that this life continually reminds us that we can have neither.**
  - **The Law of Diminishing Returns** – because we live in temporal reality, everything we want is lacking. The Law of Diminishing returns means that every time you engage with something it fills you up just a little bit less than it did last time. That's the nature of a decaying world.
    - That **car** you bought was awesome on the lot. 3 years later, there are so many better models.
    - That **New house** felt like you could live there forever, until it didn't.
    - That **church** seemed so perfect until you learned its flaws.
    - That **man** you married was the best one ever...we'll let that one go for now.
    - **The very nature of advertising** is convincing you that a new product is the answer to your longing that you may not even have known you have. It's a promise that this time it will be different. This time it will satisfy. This time you will be more full and complete. All the while the companies know that it's only a matter of time when that product will fail you too.
  - **The Insatiable Redesign of Religions** – the insatiable redesign of religions demonstrates that we are unwilling to let a deity be in charge of us and in our efforts to control not just this life but the afterlife, we continually see mankind develop new belief systems and religious systems that allow a hopeful outcome but align with our current desires.
    - **Every new religion** promises that it's not like the others. This time it will fill you up. This time it's the real pathway to God. This time it will get you to heaven.
    - **Every new generation redefines it's religions.** They pick apart the foundation and redesign it to fit their worldview. They throw out the parts that are hard or they don't agree with and emphasize the parts that do.
- **The Truth remains that in this life there is nothing that truly satisfies**, it wasn't built to. Almost everything here is built to be temporary.
- **And the secondary truth remains that any religion or faith** that is designed or redesigned by man, can't get us past the grave.
- **So, what are we to do with our greatest longings and our future hope? I have three words for you:**

**Jesus is ENOUGH**

- **Christ is the beginning of our life and the sustaining of our life.**
  - If we're going to **BECOME Who God Made Us to Be...We Need to Be Sustained by Christ Alone**
  - **Explanation about loneliness** – To those of us who have been walking with the Lord long enough we have realized that there are things that just being with God doesn't fill up. For example loneliness. People say to us, "Jesus is enough" but Jesus doesn't greet us at our door at night. Jesus doesn't tuck us in. Jesus doesn't crawl in bed next to us. Jesus doesn't sip latte with us. So, in what way is Jesus enough?
    - **God Knows the Limitation and Called it Out at Creation** – God said about Adam that it wasn't good for man to be alone. Even though Adam had God walking and talking with him periodically in the Garden, he needed someone with skin on them to feel fulfilled. But consider this:
      - **It's Not Just being around people** – Too many of us have lived around toxic people to know that merely being around people isn't always life-giving. Too many of us feel more alone in a crowd than in our rooms. So, it's not merely the presence of people. It's certain types of people and certain types of blessings that they bring.
      - **It's Still God We Crave** – When we look for assurance from our parents, it's God speaking through them that we want. When we look to friends for compassion and affirmation, it's the Holy Spirit whispering through them that we want. When we feel protection, it's the protection of God through them we want. When it's a spouse, it's the godly parts of our spouse that fill us up, not the other parts. What we are craving is the image of God in them. We are craving the Holy Spirit in them. We are craving the unique way that God flows through their personality to minister to us.
        - **This is important** - **God provides indirectly through community what he does not provide directly from his spirit.** Community is designed to fill what God does not provide directly.
          - **Air Illustration** – We all need air, every moment to survive. In general there is air around us that we breathe and that sustains our lives. But sometimes we enter environments where our air needs to be packaged differently, like in scuba-diving. We need that same air given to us through a different container. In the same way fellowship with other people brings us the air from God that we need in special containers into our social spaces.
  - **If we abide in Him, we will live**, if we try to survive on anything from this world, we will die.
    - **And that leads us to our message today...**

#### Context of Our Passage Today

- **The story we are studying is Jesus dropping truth bombs** on the people. He says stuff that blows their mind and no one is quite sure what to think about it. It's confusing and

offensive<sup>1</sup>. But four times He says 'it's really important', so we are going to walk into the mess together today. But context is everything, so let's get our parameters set first.

- **Chronology is tough** since most of the gospels are arranged thematically, but it appears that:
  - **It's Passover Festival Season going on.** That in the back of people's minds but it's not likely The Lord's Supper here. This is a sermon to a group of mixed people (disciples, apostles, new believers, non-believers).
  - **Prior Day Miracles, Preaching, Healing (king group)** - Jesus had just fed the Five Thousand the day before, after a long day of preaching, healing. It was so powerful that one group tried to force him to become king of the Jews physically.
  - **Prior Night: Walk on Water** - That night before Jesus had walked on water and their group went back to the Jewish side of the Lake near Capernaum.
  - **On a walk to the Synagogue** – Jesus will be having the following conversation while he is met by a crowd and walks them into the synagogue in town.

## Lesson

- **Double Minded People**
  - **The Mixed Motivations for Seeking Jesus**
    - **Jn 6:22–26** – *“On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea [of Galilee] saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone [so where's Jesus?].<sup>23</sup> Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks [and fed the 5,000].<sup>24</sup> So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”<sup>26</sup> Jesus [ignoring their question] answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you<sup>2</sup> [this is important], you are seeking me, not because you saw signs [that would point you to who I really am], but because you ate your fill of the loaves<sup>3</sup>.”*
      - **The greatest thing about heaven is not the stuff, it's the One waiting for us there.**
  - **What Must I Do?**
    - **What Gospel Work Is**
      - **Jn 6:27** – *“Do not work [or exchange your life] for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man [Jesus Himself the Messiah]*

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<sup>1</sup>At the end of this discourse (that goes on longer than the passage we studied), it says that a number of Christ's disciples no longer followed Him. Ref. John 6:66-69

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly this statement, “Truly, truly, I say to you.” Is really a description of the word, ‘Amen.’ Usually it was used by other people to affirm a statement of another. Jesus used it commonly BEFORE He was about to say something really important and true.

<sup>3</sup> *“They had not reflected on the spiritual significance of the sign they had seen. “Instead of seeing in the bread the sign, they had seen in the sign only the bread.” They came because their hunger had been satisfied. They were moved not by full hearts, but by full bellies.”* NICNT Commentary quoting others like Lange.

*will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal*<sup>4</sup>.” [approval; authentication]

- **Do not work for food that perishes** – spend what you have in this earthly existence on connecting to God. Everything here fades and fails. All with God is eternal.
  - **Lifting our bar of life** – raising our expectations to live for greater things and not settling for less.
- **Jn 6:28–29** – “*Then they said to him, “What must we do [be doing]<sup>5</sup>, to be doing the works of God?”* <sup>29</sup> *Jesus answered them, “This is the work<sup>6</sup> of God [=], that you [continually] believe<sup>7</sup> in him [Jesus] whom he[the Father!]<sup>8</sup> has sent [from heaven to earth].”*”
  - **Faith & Works** – we are saved by faith alone. Any salvation must be a free gift since human beings can’t bring anything to the table. But, although salvation has been offered to everyone (Jesus died for the sins of the world), salvation is not effective for everyone (not everyone gets saved). Why not? That salvation must be engaged with. How do we do that? What do we do? If we are doing something isn’t that an action on our part to make it happen? Isn’t that a technical ‘religious work’? Not really. Look at what the work is and determine if it’s work or not, difficult or not.
    - **One of the Biggest Religious Questions:** What must I do to be saved?
    - **What are the WORKS of God?** – what must we do to be righteous? What must we do to become a Christian? What must we do to please God? – the answer is direct: believe in Jesus Christ (verses 28-29). We talk about what believing means earlier in this series, but recap here. The point is firmly made in verse 40 as well.
      - **Explaining: If you obey my commandments** – Jesus and John the Apostle both use phrases that have caused some confusion when it comes to salvation and how to live as a Christian. They say phrases like this...
        - John 3:36 – “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*”<sup>9</sup>
        - 1 John 5:1-3 – “*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the*

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<sup>4</sup> “The affixing of a seal was common in antiquity as a mark of ownership. In an age when many were illiterate the seal attested ownership as a written label could not. But a seal could also authenticate a document or the like; the seal showed that the seal’s owner approved. This is the meaning here. The Father has set the seal of his approval on the Son.” NICNT

<sup>5</sup> “The present subjunctive denotes continuity: “What is to be our regular course of action?”” NICNT

<sup>6</sup> “Jesus replaces their “works of God” with the singular “work of God.” But one thing is needful. And this one thing, he makes plain, is faith.” NICNT

<sup>7</sup> “...the present tense here denotes the continuing attitude, not the once-for-all decision...” NICNT

<sup>8</sup> “he” is emphatic—none less than he!” NICNT

<sup>9</sup> cf. Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 4:17

*love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”*

- John 14:15 - *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*
  - **Every legalistic person and church have resulted from a mistranslation of passages like these.** They view it through the lens of performance and reward. But we see here in our story today, in John 6:29 the answer. Jesus defines His own terms. What must we do to be saved? What must we do to inherit eternal life? What must we do to be Christians? Believe/trust in Jesus Christ. That is the great work. That is the great obedience.
  - **The rest of the Bible talks about how to live out our identity** and that has to do with obedience to other commands, but when we are talking about salvation there is only one Good Work we must do: Believe.
- **The Object of Faith**
    - **How do we know that Christ is Legitimate?**
      - **Jn 6:30–35** – *“So they said to him, “Then what sign do you<sup>10</sup> do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? [what big miracle can you do to prove you are the Messiah?] <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness [with Moses]; as it is written [in a couple OT passages]<sup>11</sup>, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”*
      - **Why Bring up Manna?** – it could be that they wanted to highlight that true men from God are attested to by miracles and that was one of the most famous miracles that Jewish history taught, so they refer to the great Moses. Or it could be that they had bought into a concept that the coming Messiah would duplicate the miracle of manna as evidence that He was the one (not sure where they would have got that, but commentators say that was a thing<sup>12</sup>). It’s most likely that they brought up manna since Jesus had just multiplied bread the day before as a miracle. They wanted more evidence on a grander scale as a sign that He was the Messiah.
      - <sup>32</sup> *Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you [this is important], it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you [even to this day] the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God [the better manna] is he [the person] who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world [wide open; all].” <sup>34</sup> They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “I am<sup>13</sup> the bread of life; whoever comes to me [leaving the world] shall not hunger [lack], and whoever believes in me [continually trusts] shall never thirst [lack].”*

<sup>10</sup> “You” is emphatic. They do not think for one moment that Jesus can produce the sign they demand.” NICNT

<sup>11</sup> “They support their plea with a quotation, apparently from Psalm 78:24 (it is also like Neh. 9:15, and has some resemblances to Exod. 16:4, 15; Ps. 105:40, but agrees exactly with none of these).” NICNT

<sup>12</sup> “This section of the discourse is to be understood against the background of a Jewish expectation that, when the Messiah came, he would renew the miracle of the manna... In a way this is a strange choice, for the multiplication of the loaves seems to be a sign of exactly the same type.” NICNT

<sup>13</sup> The first of 7 “I AM” statements in John.

- **Better than Manna** – the Jews knew their history and the evidence of the miracle of manna in the desert (supernatural life-giving, sustenance). Jesus said, ‘I can do you one better...ME’. Jesus came down from heaven like manna did, but what He offers is forever. He hints at Living Water in this passage as well (ex. Verse 35).
- **I am the Bread of Life** – He says that quite a few times here. It’s the main point. What does bread represent? Bread is a core component of most human diets (especially in the ancient world and especially in the Middle East – rice would be an equivalent in other nations). Jesus must be our core.
- **Anything that matters is going to come from Him and that He is the source of all life.**
- **The Word Became Flesh**
  - **The Message of Salvation Through Christ**
    - **Jn 6:36–47** – *“But I said to you<sup>14</sup> that you have seen me and yet do not believe [the offer isn’t being received]. <sup>37</sup>All [the people] that the Father gives me will come to me [supernatural calling, not just a good idea], and whoever comes to me I will never [!] cast out [I will protect forever]. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven<sup>15</sup>, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me [I’m on a mission]. <sup>39</sup>And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day<sup>16</sup> [I’m here to save completely]. <sup>40</sup>For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son [turns their focus onto Him] and believes in him [trusting that He is who He says He is and can do what He says He can do] should/will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day [when I come back and make all things right].”*
    - **Why Belief/faith is the most important thing** – it’s the only thing we can bring to the table. We can engage. We can’t pay for it. We can’t barter for it. We can’t earn it. It’s what we have. It’s the honoring of trusting God when things still aren’t fully clear.
    - *<sup>41</sup>So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” [they couldn’t believe it] <sup>42</sup>They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? [He’s a regular guy from the neighborhood] How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” <sup>43</sup>Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him<sup>17</sup> [no one can believe this unless God the Father opens their eyes, hearts and minds]. And I will raise him up on the last day.*

<sup>14</sup> No clear reference to when He said this to them. It was sometime ‘prior’.

<sup>15</sup> “The thought of his coming down from heaven is repeated seven times in this chapter (vv. 33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, and 58).” NICNT

<sup>16</sup> “The last day” is an expression found only in John in the New Testament. It is clear evidence that John, like the other New Testament writers, held a futurist eschatology and looked for Jesus to usher in the final state.” NICNT

<sup>17</sup> “Now he says that no one “can” come unless the Father draws him. The thought of the divine initiative in salvation is one of the great doctrines of this Gospel, and indeed of the Christian faith. People like to feel independent. They think that they come or that they can come to Jesus entirely of their own volition. Jesus assures us that this is an utter impossibility. No one, no one at all, can come unless the Father draws him.” NICNT

<sup>45</sup> *It is written in the Prophets [Isa 54:13]<sup>18</sup>, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ [personally He will call them and direct them] Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me [I’m His emissary] — <sup>46</sup> not that anyone has seen the Father [in all His glory] except he who is from God [Me]; he/I has/have seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you [this is important], whoever believes has eternal life.”*

- **Why coming to faith is tricky** – My job would be so much easier if I just had to convince people. I’m pretty convincing. I’ve done enough study to usually walk circles around people when it comes to Christianity. But convincing isn’t the name of the game. People don’t become Christians by being convinced by reason alone. It makes it easier for them to accept, but at the end of the day, the Bible is clear: no one is getting saved until God opens their eyes, ears and hearts. Period. No matter of information is going to get someone to heaven. It’s all-God, or nothing.
- **Christian Cannibalism**
  - **Eating and Drinking Christ**
    - **Jn 6:48–59** – *“I am the bread of life [the true source & sustenance].*
      - **“You are what you eat.”** Have you heard that? What does it mean?
      - **My flesh is that bread** – sounds creepy but truly it’s practical. Jesus had to die for the sins of the world so we might live. It’s about source and sustenance. Jesus embodies what we need to survive and thrive, and we need to accept it, ingest it and live off of Him and His truth.
      - **What do we get from ‘living off of Jesus Christ?’** – The main sustaining gift we get is the Person of the Holy Spirit. He brings along with Him a host of gifts.
        - **The Fruit of the Spirit - Ga 5:22–23** – *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control...”* – It’s not a to-do list, it’s a blessings list. It’s what happens in our lives when the Holy Spirit is freely flowing in us and through us.
        - **For Me** – I have the life of God, but my quality of life ebbs and flows too much. My peace is still spotty. My patience rises and falls. What I crave is the type of life that is continually connected to the source so that I might thrive and fill others.
    - <sup>49</sup> *Your [fore]fathers ate the manna in the wilderness [with Moses], and they died.*
      - <sup>50</sup> *This is [I am] the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat<sup>19</sup> of it [one time saving act] and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down<sup>20</sup> from heaven [Incarnation]. If anyone eats of this bread [one time act], he will live forever.*

<sup>18</sup> Or Jer 31:34.

<sup>19</sup> *“eat” is in the aorist tense, of the once-for-all action of receiving Christ...”* NICNT

<sup>20</sup> *“Came down” is in the aorist, pointing to the single act of the incarnation.”* NICNT

- **The limitations of Manna** – Manna was amazing. It was both physically sustaining and supernaturally moving (fed by God directly). But those who ate manna, eventually died. This is the problem with chasing after God for only miracles and not the miracle-giver. Great experiences with God are amazing. They are both physically sustaining (i.e. healing) and they are supernaturally moving (touched by God), but those who have experiences with God still die. Unless we are attached to the giver of good things, we will die too. HE is the prime goal, not His stuff.
- *And the bread* [core offering] *that I will give for the life of the world* [to save sinners] *is my flesh*<sup>21</sup> [by dying for you on the cross].”<sup>52</sup> *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”* [this doesn’t make sense]<sup>53</sup> *So Jesus* [doubles down on creepiness and] *said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you* [this is important], *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood*<sup>22</sup> [both one time acts], *you have no life in you* [you are even dead right here where you stand].<sup>54</sup> [But,] *Whoever feeds*<sup>23</sup> [loudly munches continually] *on my flesh and drinks my blood* [continually] *has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day* [eternal life with me].<sup>55</sup> *For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink* [what I provide is what really matters].
- **Abiding** – in verse 56 He introduces what it means to consistently feed on His flesh and drink His blood continually, it means to ABIDE.
  - **Abiding means a few things:** I’ll give you three...
    - **1. The New Way of Doing Things Permanently** - It means setting up a permanent state of being, a new home, a new reality.
    - **2. Drawing from the True Source** – it means continually living off of what God pours down. We love because He fills us with love. We forgive because He forgave us. We keep going because He provides the energy. We heal and do miracles but the Holy Spirit empowers us, etc.
    - **3. Continual Connection** – it means the deepest, most intimate form of relational connection. It means fusing together. It means sharing thoughts and dreams. It means laughing and crying together. It means doing things together. It means living together.

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<sup>21</sup> “Flesh” is a striking word. In distinction from “my body” or “myself” it puts marked emphasis on the physical side of life. It is a strong word and one bound to attract attention. Its almost crude forcefulness rivets attention on the historical fact that Jesus did give himself for others. He is not speaking simply of a moving idea. Many commentators speak as though the word “flesh” self-evidently marked a reference to Holy Communion. It, of course, does nothing of the sort. The word is not found in the narratives of the institution, nor in 1 Corinthians 10 or 11 in connection with the sacrament. Nor is it common in the Fathers in this sense. The usual word in sacramental usage is “body.” NICNT

<sup>22</sup> “Now he speaks explicitly of eating his flesh, and he adds the drinking of his blood, an idea that would be especially abhorrent to Jews because they were forbidden to partake of blood (Gen. 9:4, etc.).” NICNT

<sup>23</sup> “The word for “eats” is different from that used previously, and it is used again in the following verses (56, 57, 58; elsewhere in the New Testament only in Matt. 24:38; John 13:18). It properly applies to somewhat noisy feeding (like “munch” or “crunch”). There is often the notion of eating with enjoyment (so in Matt. 24:38). It is a startling word in this context, and stresses the actuality of the partaking of Christ that is in mind. Some suggest that it points to a literal feeding and therefore to the sacrament. But this does not follow. There is no logic in saying: “The verb is used of literal eating. Therefore eating the flesh of Christ must mean eating the communion bread.” On any showing there is a symbolic element in the “eating,” and it is better to understand it, as in the earlier reference, to receiving Christ.” NICNT – Side Note: Feeds = is a present, active word – continual action.



- <sup>56</sup> *Whoever* [continually] *feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides* [continually remains] *in me*<sup>24</sup>, *and I in him.* <sup>57</sup> *As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me* [continuously], *he also will live because of me.* <sup>58</sup> *This is* [I am] *the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the* [fore] *fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread* [on Me] *will live forever.”* <sup>59</sup> *Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum*<sup>25</sup>.”
- **Eating and drinking Christ** – We all accept that God the Father GAVE His Son for us, right? Okay, so then we go to the next step: Jesus GAVE His life and body and blood on the cross for our salvation right? Okay. **So we have body & blood offered. What do we do with it?** We have to appropriate it, receive it, engage with it, take it, whatever you want to say, somehow we need to allow it to be effective for us. Everyone can learn the gospel but only those who receive it will be saved. Right? It’s not about information, but acceptance, right? Right! Jesus takes that concept and puts a wild metaphor to it: **Eat it & Drink it.**

### Conclusion

- **Jesus is what we truly need – on every level.**
- **This truth is About...FOREVER** – Christianity is not an add on, it’s an overhaul. It’s a new quality of life. One we were built for originally but has lain dormant or dead. Jesus wants to turn on the power and help us live the life we were designed for.
- **Altar Call**
  - **Those that need to be made alive**
  - **Those that need God to teach them how to be sustained by Him alone.**

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<sup>24</sup> “remains” (the tense is continuous; it denotes more than fleeting contact) in Christ...” NICNT

<sup>25</sup> “John adds a note locating the speech he has just recorded; it took place “in synagogue” (cf. our “in church”), as Jesus taught in Capernaum. The absence of the article in the Greek seems to indicate an assembly for worship, not simply the building.” NICNT