

Text: John 6:41-59

Title: "Believe because Jesus is the Bread of Life – part 2"

Time: 10/6/2024 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: John 6 contains Jesus's "Bread of Life Discourse." Our passage indicates that the synagogue in Capernaum was the setting in which Jesus gave this Discourse (v. 59). Later in John's Gospel, when Jesus sums up His ministry in His defense before the high priest on the night of His crucifixion, He describes His ministry this way: "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20). While it is certainly true that Jesus preached in other places as well, the times and places of the gatherings of God's people He did not miss. The same is true of our meeting here this morning.

Synagogue is a word that means *led together*, and it refers to an *assembly*, like our words *congress*, *congregate*, or *congregation*, from the Latin *gradior* meaning *to go* and *con* meaning *together*. The earliest New Testament book, the Epistle of James, refers to the local church with the word *synagogue* (James 2:1-4, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly [i.e., *synagogue*] a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?).")

The early local churches were patterned after the synagogue assembly. Somewhat later, the Greek word *ekklesia*

came to be used for the local church assembly. It literally means *a calling out*, and it refers to the assembly created by a town crier who would summon citizens to a town meeting.

I mention this because I want us to see the importance of our local church assembly times to our understanding of the Bread of Life Discourse. Those members of the synagogue at Capernaum who were missing from the assembly on this Saturday missed the message that Jesus had for them. God's messages come to His people in assemblies like this one. We are here this morning, and by God's grace we shall not miss the message that Jesus has for us from the Bread of Life Discourse today.

Two weeks ago, we looked at the first part of the Discourse (vv. 22-40). There we found three things that the Discourse tells us about the Bread of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is eternal (vv. 22-27); He is a gift (vv. 28-33); and He is security (vv. 34-40). Now, beginning with verse 41, Jesus's Discourse shifts from what the Bread of Life is to what those who hear His discourse must do with the Bread of Life. I would like us to notice three things the Lord wants us to do with the Bread of Life this morning.

I. Stop murmuring, and start hearing and learning (vv. 41-46).

Illustration: The word *murmur* tells us that the Jews responded negatively to Jesus's claim to be the Bread of Life come down from heaven. In addition, it tells us what that negative response sounded like. When the Jews complained to one another the words of verse 42, it sounded the way the word *murmur* sounds. So, *murmur* is an example of what grammarians call onomatopoeia, words like *bang*, *zap*,

or *pop*. It turns out, the Greeks use the same literary device in their word for *complaining*. Their word is *gonguzo* (γογγύζω), which sounds a little bit like our word *grumble*. So it is biblical to say that complaining is not only bad, it also sounds really bad, whether the word for it is *murmur*, *gonguzo*, or *grumble*.

Application: Jesus tells His hearers to stop their murmuring (v. 43), and then He mentions their need to be drawn out of their murmuring by God the Father in order for them to come to Him and to be raised up by Him on the last day (v. 44). To get to where Jesus is, we must be drawn there by God the Father and raised up on the last day by God the Son.

The word translated *draw* here (ἔλκω) is used 8 times in the NT, six times in a mundane way and two times in a theological way. The mundane uses help us to understand the theological uses. What we learn from the mundane uses of this word is that it actually means *to drag something successfully from one place to another*. Our English word *to draw* can mean *to drag successfully from point a to point b*, but it can also mean merely *to encourage someone to get from point a to point b*—not so with the Greek word. We learn this from the mundane usages: John 18:10, Peter draws a sword; John 21:6 and 11, the disciples haul in a fishing net; Acts 16:19, Paul and Silas are dragged into the marketplace of Philippi; Acts 21:30, Jews drag Paul out of the temple; and Jam. 2:6, rich people drag believers into court.

So, Jesus is literally saying here that no one is able to come to Him or be raised up by Him on the last day unless the Father first drags that person to Him. I believe that what Jesus is referring to here is God's work of salvation that Psalm 40 speaks of: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he

inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" (vv. 1-3).

So how do we recognize the difference between someone still in the horrible pit of their sin and someone whom God the Father has dragged out of that pit? The next verse of Jesus's Discourse tells us how to recognize this saved man (v. 45a). Jesus is quoting Isaiah 54 here, where a once disobedient and judged nation of Israel is promised that someday they will all be taught of God as His children. So the difference between someone still in the pit of their sin and under the judgment of God, like rebellious Israel of the past and present, and someone whom God has dragged out of that pit, like the Israel of the future, is that those dragged out have both heard and learned of the Father (v. 45b).

There is a difference, of course, between merely having heard and having heard such that we are now learning. The word the Lord uses here for *learn* is related to the word He used for His *disciples*. People dragged out of the horrible pit of sin are disciples of Christ, and disciples of Christ are focused on learning. And what are they trying to learn? Verse 46 tells us. They are trying to learn to see the Father like Jesus does. In other words, they are trying to learn to be more like Jesus. If you are a disciple of Christ this morning, this is your goal—to be more like the Son, Who can see the Father.

So, this is what we must do with the Bread of Life this morning. We must stop murmuring and start hearing and learning. Put aside your selfish complaints, see your need for the Father to drag you out of the horrible pit of your sin, and become someone who is taught of God, someone who not only has heard Him, but is learning to be like His Son,

Who can see Him. Has this happened to you? Have you been dragged out of the pit you were in? Having heard do you now seek to learn? If not, stop murmuring and start hearing and learning.

II. Stop dying, and start believing and living (vv. 47-50).

Illustration: I came across the salvation testimony of a sister in Christ named Dr. Rosalind Picard. She is an A.I. scientist at M.I.T. and one of the founders of a company called Empatica, which has invented a machine-learning system that is able to use a smart watch to recognize when someone is having a seizure and then obtain help for that person. Her research focus in artificial intelligence is in the arena of affective computing, helping machines learn to express human emotion. She hopes to help kids with autism with this technology, among other things.

I mention the interview of Dr. Picard because she described A.I. in a unique way. Understanding that no machine could ever be fully human, because humans are much more than mere bodies, Dr. Picard reminded her listeners that an A.I. machine is a device that takes inputs, manipulates them with algorithms, and provides outputs. So rather than calling this technology with a lofty metaphor like *artificial intelligence*, we might do better to call it simply *input-algorithm-output processors*.

Application: In our passage, Jesus speaks of the Bread of Life to listeners who believed that the most important thing was feeding their bodies. They give no thought to that part of their humanity that is not their body, what the Bible calls the conscious mind, the person, the soul, and life immortal. We live in a day when people are still thinking that way. The whole idea of duplicating humanity with artificial intelligence seems to reduce humanity to mere machine.

So, whether the solution to your problem is more manna from heaven or more machine learning, the problem you are trying to solve is still the problem of only half the man, and the less important half.

To a world like that Jesus says the strange words of our passage: "I am the Bread of Life. . . . This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." He said to His generation, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead." He might say to our generation, "Your sons are going to create human-like robots, but then your sons will die." Whether man's hope is manna from heaven for his physical need or artificial intelligence for his physical need, man's destiny is death without the Bread of Life.

What can we do about this? We can stop dying and start believing (v. 47). Dr. Picard has done so. Jesus could not be clearer or more emphatic with us this morning. Do you believe that He is your Savior? Do you have everlasting life because you have trusted Him for it?

III. Stop striving, and start eating and drinking (vv. 51-59).

Illustration: The story of the Bible is really about two trees: the tree of life and the cross of Calvary. We find the tree of life at the beginning of the Bible in the Garden of Eden. Man is barred from its twelve fruits and healing properties and expelled from the Garden because of his sin.

But the last chapter of the Bible tells us about a place where man has access again to the tree of life. It is not far from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1-2). So the tree of life is one of the important trees encompassing the whole story of the Bible.

The other tree, of course, is the cross of Calvary. It is the tree that makes the renewed access to the tree of life possible for mankind.

Application: I mention these trees because Jesus speaks of eating the fruit of the tree of the cross in this passage. The cross was a tree that bore Jesus's flesh and Jesus's blood hanging from its branches. No one is barred from this hill or the fruit of this tree. It is a free gift for the life of the world (v. 51).

The fruit of Calvary, the flesh and blood of the Messiah, is a scandalous offense to many, certainly for these Jews who were forbidden from ever literally drinking blood. It is also an offense to every proud heart that refuses to believe that such violent suffering was necessary to make right the wrongs that it has done. Proud hearts still strive among themselves when they contemplate the cross (v. 52). Does your heart echo that question?

But the cross is the only tree that can get you back to the tree of life (vv. 53-54). The fruit of the cross is the only real food in the sense that no other food can make you live forever (v. 55). When we eat and drink the sacrifice of the cross, Jesus dwells within our spirit and our spirit within Him, through the work of the Holy Spirit, just as surely as our breakfast became a part of our bodies this morning (v. 56). And just like Jesus lives for the Father who sent Him, so we can live for the Son who sends us (v. 57, *by = because*). He who eats this bread shall live forever (v. 58).

Conclusion: Last Wednesday was my birthday, and I received some nice "Happy Birthday" wishes on my phone that day. The first was from my brother-in-law, Greg Igle, who said also that he was praying for me that morning

around 5am. That was a great blessing. I am 61 years old now, so I wrote back, and I told Greg, "I am getting older, but I am living forever too, so praise the Lord." It turns out that getting older is not a problem when you happen to be living forever.

I know you can say with me that you too are getting older. Can you also say with me, on the basis of the truth of this Bread of Life Discourse, "I am living forever too"? Hear Jesus's emphatic promise of this truth with me one more time: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (v. 47).

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching