

Series: Portraits of Jesus in John	Reference: <i>John 6</i>	Title: Bread of Life	Date: 03.15.2019
Website Writeup: Many don't mind a Savior, but Lord is a different story. Do we just want Jesus to get us through the door, or do we rely on Him as our daily sustenance in all things?			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

Memory Verses for this Series - about 1 every 2 weeks

Turn to p728 in your church Bibles to John 6. Keep your finger there as we refer to this story of the feeding of the 5000 - we'll be skipping over touching on important points.

They say never go shopping while hungry because you spend a great deal more. We might tell John not to write a Gospel while hungry & thirsty - everything's about eating & drinking. We've heard about Living Water last week which satisfies forever & today we're going to hear about the Bread of Life. Bread's good, but it's not exactly a staple for us as it was for these ancient people. Indonesians could eat their fill of fish, chicken & veggies...but no rice & they hadn't eaten yet. Rice was the staple for the Indonesian diet. Americans haven't even explored the possibilities of rice as Asians have! Rice was made into every thing from soup to candy & deserts! Deserts were soft & after sitting in a house filled with clove cigarette smoke for hours they tasted like it!

After Indonesia I found myself craving rice after eating it 3 times a day for 8 years. I still dream about hot fried rice with shrimp & who knows what else in it on the side of a road in a dusty makeshift tent. The first few times I'd pick things out & ask, "What's that!?" But over time you just eat it. There may be arteries, pieces of goat stomach, brain, the fingernail of the cook, who knows? But you *do* know, he washed your plate by dipping in a bucket of dirty water once, after letting the rats eat the scraps of it in the corner from the person before you, then wiped it down with the same rag he wipes down all the old wooden tables & which he never washes. But you don't care - it's just good fried rice...peppers & hot sauce kill bacteria anyway. The Indonesian concept of food is - if it breathes, eat it & every bit with rice! Protein! They top their fried rice with a crispy egg & generous amounts of hot sauce! Bread held the same idea in Jesus' culture, it was a staple which meant life to people. He's speaking their language. The Irish might say, the potato of life. Indonesians, the rice of life. To these people Jesus says He's the Bread of Life, sustaining us not just for salvation, but in daily life. Why do we follow Jesus? Do we want the daily Bread of Life He offers, or something else?

A crowd of people had just followed Jesus because they saw Him healing the sick in v2. 5000 men, add women & children, and it was quite a bit more, and they'd found themselves out in a field without anything to eat. Jesus feeds them, multiplying a few loaves & a couple of fish. Then His disciples get in a boat going over to Capernaum. Jesus stays behind on a mountain, because verse 15 says He knew, "*that they intended to come & make him king by force...*" Later He walks on water to His disciples in the

boat. A remnant of this 5000 apparently hung around & looking for Him. After a while they figure He's over with the disciples in Capernaum, so they sail over to find Him.

Verse 25...*When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"* They hadn't witnessed Him get into the boat. Keep in mind, they'd come because they'd seen Him heal the sick, multiply fish & loaves, and enjoyed a meal. And think, any guy who can heal the sick & reproduce food with a word, we gotta make Him king. So, the question is, do they really want Jesus for what He offers? Jesus answers that, ignoring their question, going straight to the heart of the matter...

Verse 26...*Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves & had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."* They got fed. A sign they're not following Jesus for what He offers, but for what they can get. As He did with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the man by the pool at Bethesda, He begins to open their minds to stop looking down at circumstances & look up to Him.

Pascal once said: "There once was in man a true happiness of which now remain to him only the mark & empty trace, which he in vain tries to fill from all his surroundings, seeking from things absent the help he does not obtain in things present. But these are all inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite & immutable object, that is to say, only by God Himself."

In Greek mythology, *King Tantalus* was punished in the underworld chained in a lake. The waters which reached up to his chin receded quickly out of reach whenever he bent down to satisfy his burning thirst. Over his head were branches laden with choice fruit, which withdrew whenever he reached up to satisfy his hunger. A symbol of utter frustration & temptation, his name's immortalized in the English word "*Tantalize*."

We as Christians, on the opposite side of knowing Jesus, may still have the same problem. We may not need food & water, or a powerful king, but we need approval, attention & get caught in our weeds of desire. The simplistic answer is, we fill our void with outward sin, but the problem's actually deeper - it's a problem of coming to the end of our Self & reliance only on Jesus. *Francis Schaeffer, during a particularly difficult time in his life said, "I have discovered the present value of the Blood of Christ."* Meaning, *beyond* salvation, he learned reliance on Jesus for all daily need.

Consider when a pickle becomes a pickle? When it's no longer considered a cucumber? When you first put it in the jar? When you take it out? Sometime in the middle? We're saved, immersed in Christ, then begin to soak Him up through & through in daily life. A process of total faith-reliance on Him. Giving up self-reliance, relying on Jesus - heart & life-change, becoming like Jesus. *It's reflected in the verse Rachel & Lindley chose to guide our daily prayer times leading up to the Strategic Planning Meeting, Hosea 10:12... "Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up*

your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes & showers his righteousness on you.” A verse which speaks of reliance in spiritual formation.

Back to John 6, verses 28-29...*Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”* ²⁹*Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”* To believe for salvation & continually believe in formation. They're already having thoughts of making Him king. They ask this question in hopes of clear direction. Kings give orders, tell you what to do, lay out a plan to overtake your oppressors. But His answer's unexpected, *‘Believe on the one God has sent’*. When Jesus speaks of *‘believing’* He speaks of total reliance; becoming a pickle - giving up control.

Verse 30...*So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it & believe you? What will you do?”* ³¹*Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’* To understand their line of thinking we look at v14... *“Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”* That's a reference to Moses words in Deuteronomy 18:15...*“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.”* They're thinking of the story of manna in the wilderness they considered Moses to have given for 40 years. They looked at that manna & said the same thing I said about the bits & pieces in our Indonesian fried rice, “What is it?” (which is what Manna literally means). But they ate it & grew to rely on it, and it was sweet. In John 6 their eyes are still on circumstances, saying, “Moses gave us manna for 40 years, you fed us once, show us something greater. Give us more food! If you're the Prophet we'll make you king if you can prove yourself!” They're missing the point as to who Jesus is - not just a prophet, but Bread of Life in flesh. They want to stay in charge of their lives & for Jesus to be errand boy. They don't mind a Savior, but don't want a Lord.

In verse 32...*Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.”* ³³*For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven & gives life to the world.”* God provided, not Moses. In that story only enough manna was provided for one days need - a 40 year lesson in daily reliance. Jesus is telling them, “The bread which comes down from heaven will sustain you every single day of your life - learn to rely on it daily!” He won't be their puppet, He's offering Himself & just as the manna from heaven was sweet, so is Jesus. As if saying, ‘Up until now you've relied on yourself. Rely on me & I'll bring you life’. But again, relying on Him means giving up my precious Self.

Verse 34...*“Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”* Eyes still on circumstance - not on Jesus. So, He clarifies in verse 35...*Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”* With this He breaks the back of faulty understanding & launches into a discourse explaining, it's His body & blood which brings true life. Not what they want to hear! They grumble just as the Israelites did under Moses. Finally, in verse 60 they say, *“This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”* Unexpected & not what they wanted to hear. And Jesus cleans house of all those who really weren't their for Him, but only what

they could get from Him. And the result is in verse 66...*From this time many of his disciples turned back & no longer followed him.* We pastors experience this often, because when we get down to it the issue is, is Jesus Lord of your life? Many want a Savior, but they reject the Lord part.

The popular phrase right now is *Love Wins*. Sounds great, but it can be a mask for pride. It's not really love at all when total tolerance, acceptance & acquiescence to anyone's errant thought, unbridled desire, or sin-life is love's definition. Even when that means destruction & spiritual death for people. That's not love. The term should be *Jesus Wins*. Since when all come under His Lordship, life, purpose & abundance are found. Self-denial & repentance of sin aren't only healthy, but necessary in the Christian life.

These people turn away - they can't bring themselves to submit. Their fine with Him doing things *for* them, healing, getting them a job, protecting their kids, etc. But they want to stay in control, not letting go of the Self. *Living out of a Self-Confidence, not Faith.* Or, maybe we should say *Self-Righteousness vs Christ-Righteousness.* Problem is, those two things look a lot alike since they're both based on confidence. Both look very Christian, but have different sources of confidence. Faith starts from the point of recognition & acceptance of total human weakness & reliance on Jesus. 'Self' on the other hand relies on moral abilities, religious accomplishments & visible securities. The Self must have positive circumstances to survive. Self-confidence finds its confidence in me & my circumstances. I can say I'm a Christian, go to church, do all the right things, but if my confidence is in what I do, what I make of myself, on everything going well, it'll fail. Some go the other way in self-confidence. The person living in open licentiousness saying, "I define what's right & wrong myself, don't need Jesus to tell me. He can help, but I'm in control." Self-confidence as opposed to faith-reliance.

These are discussed in Jeremiah 17:5-8... *"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh & whose heart turns away from the Lord. ⁶ That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.*

Then contrasted with faith in verses 7-8... *"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. ⁸ They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought & never fails to bear fruit."*

The person waking every day eating the Bread of Life via the crucifixion of Self. Unswayed by circumstances, failures or hurts, because they don't need approval from anyone but Jesus. Relying on Him, not just for salvation, but for daily sustenance.

Self-confidence requires all our circumstances go well. Largely, Indonesia wasn't positive for me. Before I left things were great. Business was good, I owned two. Preaching & ministry, good, getting my pats on the back. That all changed when I got to Indonesia. Back to square one in my learning, not the rock star I thought I was. No one

knew me. I had severe culture shock & my character was attacked with false accusation. My precious reputation, dismantled. I had nothing. Indonesia showed me, what I thought was 'faith' wasn't...it was nothing more than spiritual pride. I started out dependent on Jesus & at some point I became independent of Him. He took away my idol of Self away & replaced it with Himself again. I'd lost what I thought was faith, which was simply a dark self-confidence. I ended up asking, do I know Jesus at all? Am I no longer using the product I promote?

It's easy to stand up here & harp on outward sin, but it's much harder to bring us to apply the Gospel to the all precious Self. As AW Tozer said, *"The sins of self are not something we do, they are something we are, and therein lies both their subtlety & their power."* Sin often manifests in action, but begins in the disobedient prideful heart. Ingrained in the fabric of self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love etc. Outward visible sin is born out of these. Sadly, promoting Self under the guise of promoting Christ is all too easy.

You'd think good teaching, eloquence & information would preach it out of you, but it can't. It can all be used by the Spirit, but the Self can live un-rebuked before the altar of God. Self's the veil which hides the Face of God from us. It can be removed only by soul surgery, never only by instruction. We can't instruct the Corona Virus out of a person, the virus of sin & pride can't be either. There must be a work of God to free us from Self. Inviting the Cross to do its deadly work in our heart. Bringing our self-sins to the cross for judgment. Sharing in the sufferings of Christ to taste life with Him by crucifying the Self. To be willing to let the Self die. We do that through faith-reliance on Jesus, being pickled in the Living Water of Christ.

In verses 67-69 Jesus asked the remaining disciples...*"You do not want to leave too, do you?"* ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe & to know that you are the Holy One of God. Peter's being pickled, dying to Self - He's become Lord to Peter evidenced by that rhetorical question, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"*

If it weren't for the Corona Virus we'd prayerfully end this sermon with the Lord's Table. For obvious reason we won't be practicing that today. But we can imagine it & invite all, either once again, or for the first time, to crucify the Self & be pickled in Jesus.

In verses 53-58 of John 6...*Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man & drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh & drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food & my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh & drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. (Be Pickled) ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me & I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna & died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."*

Like Baptism, the Lord's Table is an outward symbol of an inward reality of what happens in us through Jesus. He offers the Bread of Life & His Sacrificial Blood which saves once & for all, and sustains us daily. Transforming us into His likeness as we commune with Him as the Bread of Life.

DL Moody once wrote: "I firmly believe that the moment our hearts are emptied of selfishness and ambition and self-seeking and everything that is contrary to God's law, the Holy Spirit will come and fill every corner of our hearts; but if we are full of pride and conceit, ambition and self-seeking, pleasure and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. I also believe that many a man is praying to God to fill him, when he is full already with something else. Before we pray that God would fill us, I believe we ought to pray that He would empty us. There must be an emptying before there can be a filling; and when the heart is turned upside down, and everything that is contrary to God is turned out, then the Spirit will come..."

He's speaking of the crucifixion of the Self, beyond just the avoidance of outward immoral action. Crucifying even those internal heart attitudes which stand in the way of life in Christ. Jesus calls us to turn away from self-reliance; to give up sustenance through other avenues; people-pleasing, accomplishments, pet sins, material wealth, judgmental attitudes, comparisons, performance, a desire to be recognized, self-centeredness, self-righteousness...whatever it is.

The Lord's Table serves as a challenge & reminder towards daily spiritual formation to those who walk with Jesus. Maybe you've been happy for a Savior, but need Him to become Lord today. Let's end in prayer to that end. Would you bow your heads with me now. I'll say some things, leading us during this time, then give a time for silence. For those of you who've walked with Jesus a while, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the parts of you which you've not yet surrendered & to give you strength to lay them at the foot of the cross.

For those who've never stepped across that threshold with Jesus, I invite you to do so now. If you've never given your life to Jesus, simply use this time to pray a prayer of faith right now. A sample prayer's on the screen, if you take that step of faith, we'd like to hear about it. If the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart now, don't hesitate, give yourself over to the Bread of Life - accept Jesus as Lord & Savior & be reborn to new life!

Let's all use our God-given imagination in prayerful silence now to commune with the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to lead you into the presence of Christ. Imagine yourself in the throne room before Jesus. Kneeling in your minds eye. Confess your sin. Ask for forgiveness. Ask Him to reveal where you need to make Him Lord of your life today.

(Prayer for the Screen: "Jesus, I recognize You are the Living Water & Bread of Life. I turn from my sin & self-righteousness to You, the Author & Creator of my life. Save me & fill me with your Holy Spirit. Let me rely daily on You. Come be Lord & Savior of my life, right now. Amen!")

Community Group Questions:

1. Take a few minutes and read John 6 in its entirety so we have the full story around today's sermon. It's a pretty interesting time in the world to consider what we rely on daily. Things are uncertain and in upheaval. Which of your daily reliances have you lost lately? Take a moment and examine your world and the health of your spirit. Write down what you notice.
2. John 6 begins with Jesus feeding 5,000 people. He literally meets their physical reliance on bread (food). He retreats alone and later meets the disciples on their boat in the midst of stormy waters. He walks on water to meet them, when he comes on board the boat immediately moves to where they were going (v. 21). He meets their need of physical safety.
3. The crowd from the feeding of the 5,000 eventually finds Jesus in v. 25. They're still looking to get their physical needs met by Jesus: food and safety in his Kingship governance over them. Jesus tells them He has come for a different reason: to feed their souls. He invites them to daily reliance on him.
4. Is your relationship with God and your conversations with God, more about meeting your physical needs? Or is it looking into the daily reliance of your heart, mind and spirit on God to make you more like Jesus to those around you? God is certainly a provider, sustainer and healer. He loves to do that! But He offers us so much more for our daily grind. Here are some sermon quotes that may fuel your introspection...
 - Francis Schaeffer, during a particularly difficult time in his life said, *"I have discovered the present value of the Blood of Christ."* Meaning, *beyond* salvation, he learned reliance on Jesus for all daily need.
 - AW Tozer said, *"The sins of self are not something we do, they are something we are, and therein lies both their subtlety & their power. Sin often manifests in action, but begins in the disobedient prideful heart. Ingrained in the fabric of self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love etc. Outward visible sin is born out of these."*
 - Jeremiah 17: 7-8 *"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. ⁸ They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought & never fails to bear fruit."*
5. Pastor Jason used the analogy of a pickle this week. A cucumber sits in its vinegar mixture for a period of time. The cucumber is still and steady as it soaks it up. Eventually-slowly, it turns into a pickle. We're all in the pickling process as Christ's ambassadors on earth. How do you sit in stillness and be pickled in Jesus?
6. How can you practice daily reliance on God? Write something down and share it with your community group. Pray over one another.