

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

**Andy Banks**

**John 6:25-40, 48-58**

**I am the Bread of Life**

**[Read John 6:25-40, 48-58]**

**25**When the people found Jesus on the other side of the lake, they said to him, "Teacher, when did you get here?"

**26**Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: you are looking for me because you ate the bread and had all you wanted, not because you understood my miracles. **27**Do not work for food that spoils; instead, work for the food that lasts for eternal life. This is the food which the Son of Man will give you, because God, the Father, has put his mark of approval on him."

**28**So they asked him, "What can we do in order to do what God wants us to do?"

**29**Jesus answered, "What God wants you to do is to believe in the one he sent."

**30**They replied, "What miracle will you perform so that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? **31**Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, just as the scripture says, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

**32**"I am telling you the truth," Jesus said. "What Moses gave you was not the bread from heaven; it is my Father who gives you the real bread from heaven. **33**For the bread that God gives is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

**34**"Sir," they asked him, "give us this bread always."

**35**"I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "Those who come to me will never be hungry; those who believe in me will never be thirsty. **36**Now, I told you that you have seen me but will not believe. **37**Everyone whom my Father gives me will come to me. I will never turn away anyone who comes to me, **38**because I have come down from heaven to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me. **39**And it is the will of him who sent me that I should not lose any of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them all to life on the last day. **40**For what my Father wants is that all who see the Son and believe in him should have eternal life. And I will raise them to life on the last day."

**48**I am the bread of life. **49**Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, but they died. **50**But the bread that comes down from heaven is of such a kind that whoever eats it will not die. **51**I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If you eat this bread, you will live forever. The bread that I will give you is my flesh, which I give so that the world may live."

**52**This started an angry argument among them. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.

**53**Jesus said to them, "I am telling you the truth: if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. **54**Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them to life on the last day. **55**For my flesh is the real food; my blood is the real drink. **56**Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them. **57**The living Father sent me, and because of him I live also. In the same way whoever eats me will live because of me. **58**This, then, is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the bread that your ancestors ate, but then later died. Those who eat this bread will live forever."

**[Load PowerPoint, slide 1]**

We're going to have a little quiz. On the screen will appear ten types of bread from around the world. You'll see a picture of the bread and the name of the bread and next to that you'll see three countries' flags

and the names of those countries. You just have to write down which *one* of those three countries that type of bread comes from originally. You can work in groups, but write down your answers straight away, because the answers will display after each question.

**[Click 2]**

So, bread number 1 is a baguette. Do baguettes originate from a) Portugal, b) France, or c) Algeria? All write now.

**[Click 3]**

And the answer is ... France.

**[Click 4]**

Number 2: Tortilla. Do tortillas originate from a) Mexico, b) Brazil, or c) Peru? Write down your answer.

**[Click 5]**

And the answer is ... Mexico.

**[Click 6]**

Number 3: Pita. Does pita bread originate from a) Spain, b) Greece, or c) Italy? What do you think?

**[Click 7]**

It comes from ... Greece.

**[Click 8]**

Number 4 is ... agege. Does agege originate from a) South Africa, b) Zimbabwe, or c) Nigeria? Have a guess if you don't know.

**[Click 9]**

And the answer is ... Nigeria.

**[Click 10]**

Number 5: Bannock. Does bannock originate from a) Scotland, b) Wales, or c) Ireland? Write down your answer.

**[Click 11]**

It comes from ... Scotland.

**[Click 12]**

Number 6: Naan. Does naan bread originate from a) The Netherlands (or Holland), b) Germany, or c) India?

**[Click 13]**

And the answer is ... India.

**[Click 14]**

Number 7: Cornbread. Does cornbread originate from a) Norway, b) New Zealand, or c) USA?

**[Click 15]**

And the answer is ... USA.

**[Click 16]**

Number 8: Ciabatta. Do ciabattas originate from a) Croatia, b) Morocco, or c) Italy?

**[Click 17]**

They come from ... Italy.

**[Click 18]**

Number 9: Matzo – also called Matzah. Does matzo originate from a) Israel, b) Kenya, or c) Cyprus?

**[Click 19]**

And the answer is ... Israel – it's the bread used for Passover.

**[Click 20]**

Number 10: Roosterkoek. Do roosterkoek rolls originate from a) South Africa, b) Sweden, or c) Denmark?

This is the last one.

**[Click 21]**

And the answer is ... South Africa.

**[Check scores]**

Bread, in some shape or form, is a staple of life all over the world. It's relatively simple to make, it fills you up, and it is nutritious. That's why it's possible to live for a few *months* on a diet of just bread and water. You couldn't do that with chocolate! Or fruit! Or even rice! Bread is a basic life necessity.

But, when Jesus says, "I am the *Bread of Life*" does he expect us *literally* to eat him? ... Of course not, even though the Romans falsely accused the first Christians of being cannibals because of this verse! It's a metaphor, a picture to help us to understand something else. Jesus is saying, "I am *as essential to your life* as bread is. I'm not an added extra, I am the necessity you cannot do without. That's a bold claim! And if we had read on in the story, we would have found that lots of people decided not to follow Jesus anymore because of this claim. But Peter said to him, effectively, "We can't go anywhere else; You have the words that give eternal life."

## 1) Spiritual bread is more important than physical bread

And that's the first point that Jesus wants us to learn from this passage. The crowd were only really interested in getting another free meal, like the one they had when Jesus fed the 5,000+ people. But Jesus wanted them to focus on what would give them *eternal* life, not just what would make their life easier now. V.27: "Do not work for food that *spoils*; instead, work for the food that lasts for eternal life." He wanted them to focus on *spiritual*, not physical, bread; on what would feed their spirits, not their bodies. And Jesus says that he alone can give that spiritual bread: "This is the food which the *Son of Man* will give you." ("The Son of Man" is how Jesus described himself). Spiritual bread is even more important than physical bread, as Jesus also said when he was tempted by the devil in the Wilderness: Matthew 4:4: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every *word* that comes from the mouth of God."

## 2) Spiritual bread is received by faith, not by works

Secondly, we learn that spiritual bread is received by *faith*, not by works. The crowd asked Jesus a really important question: "What can we do in order to do what God wants us to do?" (v.28). And Jesus' answer would have surprised them: v.29: "What God wants you to *do* is to *believe* in the one he sent." That is in Jesus. That's it! He doesn't add *any* more – not at this point, at least. I have found this verse to be an amazing comfort at times when I find myself worrying that I'm not *doing* enough to please God. God does not require of us that we work and work for him with no rest. He is not *hard* to please. He is *delighted*, simply, if we love and trust his Son, Jesus Christ. Of course, there is work to do, but not to *earn* his

approval! Rather, we work as an expression of our love for Jesus because we already *have* his approval. But there is also a challenge in those words – they are exclusive. “What God wants you to do is to believe in *the one* he sent.” We can’t please God without believing in Jesus, however good anything else is that we do.

### 3) Spiritual bread feeds us for eternity

Thirdly, we learn that spiritual bread feeds us for eternity – for ever! V.40: “For what my Father wants is that all who see the Son and believe in him should have *eternal* life. And I will *raise them to life* on the last day.” Jesus came to give us a future. If we trust in him, even though we will one day die, we will be raised back to life and live forever in a New Heavenly Earth, with no more pain, or sorrow, or sickness, or death, or war, or evil of any kind – just Jesus and his followers, who will be made perfect like him! Surely that’s worth anything to gain that reward! And *all* God asks of us to gain it is to admit that we aren’t good enough to earn it ourselves, and to put our trust in Jesus to make us good enough through his sacrificial death and resurrection on our behalf!

### 4) Spiritual bread is symbolised in communion

And that leads to the fourth thing we can learn from this passage. It’s hard to read Jesus’ words here and not be reminded of communion. And that is deliberate. V.53: “Jesus said to them, “I am telling you the truth: if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them to life on the last day.” Those are confusing words, even as a picture. But what he means by “eat his flesh” and “drink his blood” is that we completely accept the full and eternal life that Jesus won for us when his flesh was torn and his blood shed on the cross for our forgiveness. And we symbolise, or act out, that choice every time we take Communion together. When we eat the Communion bread and drink the wine (or grape juice in our case), we make the choice again to repent of (or turn away from) our sins, to put our trust afresh in Jesus to forgive us, and to strive to live as God wants, loving him and loving everyone around us. And that way of life is actually the *best* way of life, the life that *really* satisfies us, like good bread.

### 5) Those who “eat” this Spiritual bread in faith (i.e. those who believe in Jesus), Jesus guarantees to protect and not lose

But, of course, it isn’t easy living for Jesus. Sometimes things happen that make us question what we believe – perhaps the death of a loved one, or a serious illness that goes on and on, or ridicule and bullying for being a Christian. Also, if we want to live as God wants, that means saying “No” to things that aren’t good. But sometimes those things seem really attractive, and we really want to say “Yes” to them, especially if all our friends are doing them. And that can feel really awkward. Living as God wants also means sacrificing our time and money to do *good*. For example, giving an evening or half a day this week to attend the Christian Life and Witness Course to sharpen our skills in sharing our faith with others. It’s not too late to decide to attend.

But however hard it can be to live as a Christian, the great news is that Jesus is able to hold us even when we struggle to hold on to him. I love the motto of Spurgeon’s College, where I trained for ministry, “I hold and I am held.” Listen to Jesus’ words in v.39: “it is the will of him who sent me [God] that I should not lose *any* of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them all to life on the last day.” Jesus is able to keep us following him and to make sure we get into eternal life. That’s really good news!

**[Pray]**