

The Bread of Eternal Life

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- [0 : 0 0] Thanks so much for reading, Beth. Hi, my name's Archie, pastor in training here. Let me just extend my warm welcome on this Easter Sunday, adding that to Graham's welcome.
- Do keep John chapter six open in front of you if you can. If you can get a Bible in front of you, that would be really helpful. And as you do that, let me just pray for us as we come to God's word this morning.
- Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for Easter Sunday, for all that it represents as we look to the resurrection of your son.
- And Lord, I pray that this morning as we look there in your word, that your Holy Spirit would be at work amongst us, that we might come to him, that we might see him, and that we might believe that he is who he says he is, that we might have life in him today.
- Amen. Did any of you get a really good Easter egg this morning? Like, how good is it? I love chocolate.
- [1 : 1 0] I love the excuse to eat loads of chocolate. But I have to say, I kind of hate to say this, but it's just no good for us, is it? Like, you probably shouldn't eat all that chocolate, let's be honest.
- You've really got to eat healthy. You've probably heard it said, an apple a day keeps the doctor away. You are what you eat. If you can't pronounce it, don't eat it. Our culture is obsessed with what we eat.
- And there's a kind of negative side to that, like the lies, take this pill, drink this shake, go on this diet, and you'll lose however much weight. But it's not all bad.
- Katie and I have this great health food shop that's just opened, just around the corner from our flat walls, of beautiful vegetables like that. Big buckets of brown rice and quinoa. I kind of like it. It's good to eat healthy.
- Humans have sort of always known that, actually. Hippocrates, the ancient Greek philosopher guy, apparently said this, let food be your medicine. Let medicine be your food.
- [2 : 0 9] It's good to eat healthy. You're all sitting there like, come on, it's Easter. Let me eat my chocolate. And I'm obviously not here to tell you not to eat chocolate. That's not my job.
- That's not my place at all. And I think this is really important. Our culture, really all of humanity, and this has always been the case, this obsession with what we eat, it's just a symptom of something much bigger.
- And it's actually super important. Because we want to make choices that lead to long and happy and healthy lives. Obviously, we don't always make those choices.
- But we know that if we only made unhealthy choices, it wouldn't go well for us. And I want to start by saying, go for it. Make those healthy choices. Go and live long and happy and healthy.
- But just imagine with me, okay, think about it. A bread that doesn't just promise incredible guaranteed rapid weight loss. It doesn't even just promise long and happy and healthy life.

[3 : 09] What if I told you there was a bread that promises eternal life? We all know how it ends. Whether you live happy and healthy, whether you live to a ripe old age, or you die tragically young, or some massive climate disaster wipes us all out, or the God of the universe who created it all calls it to an end.

For all of us, we know life does not last forever. But what if I told you that there was a bread that promises new life?

A bread that promises that you can live forever, raised up, resurrected in a new heavens and a new earth where you don't need to worry about what you eat to live long and happy and healthy.

Where even better than that, you get to enjoy the presence of that God who created it all, that God who made a way for you to be there. That's the promise of Easter. Not chocolate eggs, but the healthiest bread you've ever heard of.

That's where we're going. Before we get there, we're going to play a bit of a game of guess who. I'm going to invite Graham back up at this point. And as he does that, I'll just explain how this works. Do you remember the game, this game, guess who?

[4 : 26] So the way it works is you choose someone, and then the other person asks questions with a yes or no answer. You eliminate people until there's only one person left. So Graham, if you want to come up, if everyone who is willing to play and is able to could stand up for me.

And I've got someone in my head. And Graham is going to ask questions. We're going to eliminate you until hopefully there's just one person left. So go for it. Excellent.

Okay. Was this person born in Scotland? No. So if you were born in Scotland, sit down. Oh, sorry, team. Sorry, team. Okay. Is this person female?

No. So if you are a female, sit down. Okay. Does this person have blonde hair? No. Anyone with blonde hair, that's a rubbish question, Graham.

Next question. My next question would have been, do they like quinoa? But I don't know what that is. Are they clean shaven? I'll let you define that however you want. No, this person is not clean shaven.

[5 : 33] Okay. So if you are clean shaven, please sit down. Okay. Still a few. We're still a few. Is this person over six foot? No.

I don't think so. Sit down if you're over six foot. Okay. Does this person have visions of Ireland winning the World Cup in the rugby in the summer?

Yeah, I think they probably do. Right. Okay. So if you don't want Ireland to win the World Cup, sit down. You can sit down. Okay. Ireland supporters. Love it. Okay. So I was just...

No, no. Right. We're left with two. Look at this. Okay. You can just guess at this point. Okay. I'm guessing Pete. It is Pete. Yeah. It is Pete. Thanks. Thanks for playing my little game.

Well done, everyone. It's been a little bit like that as we've gone through John chapter six. If you were here last week, we're sort of trying to find the real Jesus by the process of elimination.

[6 : 34] Last week, it was the political power Jesus. The people wanted a prophet king and a military king. Really, they wanted a king who was all about political power.

We saw this story where Jesus took five loaves of bread and two fish and he fed 5,000 people. Just like if you know the Old Testament story, no worries if you don't, but just like this story where God, through Moses, had done in the Exodus thousands of years before.

And so the people wanted to treat Jesus like a new Moses because he was doing something similar. They wanted him to be a prophet come to lead them out of slavery. And they wanted him to be a king to lead an army against the Romans.

That's the king they really wanted. And so we play the guess who game. Is it the political power Jesus? Answer, no. That is not why he came. We saw instead last week that he came as the king of the universe.

So just after he had fed the 5,000, actually on the same day, he walks on water. He's in command of that chaos as if to say Jesus is God.

[7 : 41] That I am come to be present with his people to offer himself. That's the king that they really needed. And what Beth has just read for us is the very next day in the story of John's gospel.

And the crowd of people that Jesus has fed are looking for him. And they've headed back over to the other side of the lake to look for him as they do that. And we'll see in their conversation with Jesus, and we'll continue this game of guess who, this is the king that they want him to be.

The we're hungry, Jesus. The give us some rules, Jesus. And the do a miracle, Jesus. And we'll see, just like last week, that the king that they really needed was the king of the universe, come to be with them and to offer them a way to eternal life with him.

So let's start with the first one, the king they really wanted, the we're hungry, Jesus. And notice our first question, each of these is sort of structured around questions from the crowd.

The first question is in verse 25. And if you've got it in front of you, verse 25, Rabbi, when did you get here? Really, they're saying, we've been looking for you.

[8 : 57] Where did you go after that bread and fish miracle thing? Where have you been? And Jesus sees right through their question. He knows what they really want. And so in verse 26, Very truly, or truly, truly.

In other words, pay real close attention to what I'm about to say. You are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

Jesus knows why they're looking for him. And it's because on the other side of the lake, he had fed them, and they reckon he's going to do it again. This is the king that they really want.

A king who provides for their physical need. It's the, we're hungry, Jesus. Feed us. See how Jesus responds in verse 27. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life.

No. He says, no, I won't feed you. Stop looking for food that spoils, food that doesn't last, because you eat it, and then you just get hungry again, and you come looking for more.

[10 : 02] Instead, what you really need is food that endures to eternal life. This is the bread that I was talking about at the start, the healthiest bread in the world. Bread that gives eternal life. This is what you really need, he says.

And how current this is for us. We all feel it, don't we? Every day, I need this. I need that. Just at the Easter extravaganza yesterday, I was hanging out and eating ice cream with JT and his daughter, Sana.

They're away visiting her grandparents today, so I can tell you this story. Actually, JT knows I'm telling it, so it's not like I'm telling it behind his back. But Sana had this purple sorbet, and she honestly finished this sorbet in less than a minute.

She's, what, three years old, Sana? And most of it was all over her face, but it was gone. And no sooner was it gone than she started saying it, and the parents in the room will be familiar with this. I need another one.

I need ice cream. And in some ways, that's a silly story, but we all do it, don't we? We do it with food. We do it with all sorts of things. I need that new pair of trainers, or that holiday, or that car, or that house, or that promotion.

[11:07] Whatever it is, I need it. And we chase it. We crave it. We're hungry for it. In the moment, wrapped up in our desire, it can feel like our greatest need.

But we know, and it's pretty obvious when we think about it, we don't actually need those things. I saw Sana eat loads of biscuits before she had that first ice cream. She definitely did not need another one.

What do we actually need? I mean, we obviously, we do need food. We need water. We need shelter when we're hungry, when we're thirsty. And those things can feel like our greatest need, and in a sense, they are.

But see what Jesus is saying in John chapter 6. You think this is your greatest need. It's not. You have a much greater need.

Which is to be restored in relationship to the God who created you. To be forgiven and free, and to live forever with him. And so, as we play the guess who game, first question, is it the, we're hungry, Jesus?

[12:10] Answer, no. So next we get the, give us some rules, Jesus. See the next question that the crowd ask in verse 28?

What must we do to do the works that God requires? So Jesus says, here's what's on offer. It's eternal life. And they say, great. What do we need to do to get it?

What work can we do that we might get eternal life? It's the, give us some rules, Jesus. Answer from Jesus in verse 29. The work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent.

In other words, there is no work that you can do to get this bread. You can't earn it. It's simple, really. Believe in me, Jesus says, that I am who I say I am.

That the signs that you've seen me do, that they really point to something much bigger about who I am. Again, isn't this familiar for us? It's the question that every major religion asks.

[13:13] What's on offer is basically always eternal life of some description. And basically every religion gives you a sort of path to get to it. Basically every religion gives you a set of rules or works or things to do in order to get eternal life.

See what Jesus says? This is how eternal life is given. Simply by believing in him. We so naturally slip into the give me rules, Jesus mindset, don't we?

Give me something to do so that I can earn it. I think that's just the way that we're wired. It's the way our culture works. Rewarding hard work with good exam results and promotions or whatever else.

And so easily we apply that mindset here to the Christian life. But Jesus says, no. You think this is how you'll get it. It's not. It is so much better.

He says, look to him and believe that he is who he says he is. So guess who? Is it the give us some rules, Jesus? Answer, no.

[14:17] Finally then, the do a miracle, Jesus. Jesus tells them to believe and so they ask one final question of him in verse 30.

What sign will you give that we may believe in you? What will you do? They're like, do a miracle, Jesus, and then we'll believe in you. Even more specifically, they continue, Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness.

As it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. They want a sign, specifically a sign like the manna in the wilderness. If you know the Old Testament or if you were here last week, as we've said, God had led his people out of slavery in Egypt.

They're in the wilderness complaining about being hungry, just like these guys are. And God provided bread for them, manna for them to eat. And now thousands of years later, they're like, do it again.

The irony, of course, is he just did exactly that sort of sign. In fact, it was literally the day before. If you were here last week, if you weren't, you can just have a look back at the start of chapter 6.

[15 : 23] Same crowd of people. He miraculously gave them bread to eat. But they still want a sign. Do a miracle, Jesus. And this is how he responds in verse 32.

Again, very truly, truly, truly, listen closely. It is not Moses who has given you bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Notice that they're looking for a physical miracle, for physical bread.

And Jesus responds by pointing to a much greater spiritual reality. That his Father gives true bread from heaven. They're looking for an impressive physical miracle.

He points to a much deeper and greater spiritual reality. And this is just so important for us. If you're not a Christian here this morning, maybe even if you are, what would it take for you to believe, to be certain that Jesus is who he claims to be here?

[16 : 32] If he suddenly appeared right next to me in the flesh, if he miraculously provided lunch for all of us after the service, if he wrote his name across the night sky with the stars this evening.

But that is what he has done. That is what he has done. We have everything that we need, for he has revealed himself to us. God came to this world in the person of Jesus.

He walked on the earth. He even walked on the water. All serious historians agree that he died on a cross. That he rose again. It's history. And these accounts of his life that we have, like John's gospel that we're reading this morning, they're really good history.

They're incredibly well written. They are verifiable. I believe that they are true. And I often hear it said, well, that's fine for you to believe. I just don't believe it.

But see, the people in this account that we're reading this morning, they're the same. They had everything that they needed to believe. Jesus had already done signs to show them who he is.

[17 : 42] I mean, he fed 5,000 people with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. And we, we have everything that we need to believe. It's here.

It's history. He has revealed himself to us. We saw it in Psalm 22 at the start of our service. He has done it. The do a miracle Jesus.

You think this is how you'll believe it. It's not. It's so much better. He has already done it. Guess who? Is it the do a miracle Jesus answer?

No. And so finally, let's see the king that they really needed. The king that all of us really need. It's the bread of life, Jesus.

See how the crowd respond in verse 34? They say, always give us this bread. They want it. They want the bread of life. The healthiest bread in the world that promises eternal life.

[18 : 43] They want it. Because they want to live happy and healthy and forever. And then Jesus says it, verse 35. I am the bread of life.

We touched on this briefly last week. But that is a massive thing to say. It's the first of seven moments in John's gospel where Jesus says, I am dot dot dot.

It's a massive thing to say. Why? Well, again, it's the Old Testament. No worries if you don't know it. I mean, you should go and get to know it. It's great. And it really helps us understand the new. But for this morning, I am is the name that God uses to reveal himself to his people through Moses in the Exodus.

He says, I am who I am. And each of these I am's in John reveal something about who God is in Jesus. Here, I am the bread of life.

It's me, he says. Come to me. Believe in me. And you will never be hungry. You will never be thirsty. In other words, what is this saying about God in Jesus?

[19 : 53] He's saying that your greatest need, which is to know me, and your deepest desire, which is whether you realize it or not, to know me, that that will be fulfilled and satisfied in me for I am the bread of life.

It's not just happy and healthy and forever life. That's not all that is on offer here. What's on offer is Jesus himself. We've all seen the depiction of heaven, a sort of floaty in the clouds, harp playing sort of image.

The image of eternal life in the Bible is much more solid and earthy and concrete than that. It is a recreation. New heavens and new earth as it's described.

And see at the end of verse 39, we get this phrase. It's repeated at the end of verse 40. I will raise them up at the last day. The promise here is a resurrection promise.

It's a promise. It's a promise that though we will die. We will, if we believe in him, live forever with real, raised up, physical resurrection bodies.

[21 : 05] It's a wonderful promise. And it's a promise that he can make because not only did he die in our place, but as we celebrate today on Easter Sunday, he rose again, smashing the grave to bits, proving that he is who he says he is and paving the way for us to walk through the same death to eternal life path that he walked.

It's really what we celebrate today of all days. If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, if you don't believe that Jesus is who he says he is, we're so glad that you're here.

And can I just say that this is really where you should start if you want to explore this Christianity thing. This is what it really hangs on. You've got to decide, is this true? Is he really who he says he is?

Did he really come back to life? There are lots of ways that you can do that if you want to do that. And let me suggest, first thing you could do is grab this book on your way out by Rebecca McLaughlin.

They're free and it's a really helpful. She just answers some of those questions that you might have about the resurrection. Equally, go and read John's gospel. Feel free to grab me or Graham or anyone that you've seen up front today.

[22 : 18] Or if you've been brought along by a friend or a family member, they would love to talk to you about this stuff. You have got nothing to lose by asking your questions and exploring this thing.

It might just turn out to be the best thing that you ever do. That's my story and it could be yours. It's a wonderful promise. Physical, eternal, resurrection life.

And you know, it's even better than that because we can't separate it all from the purpose of it. Much more than that, it will be a place where Jesus is.

Where we are restored to a perfect relationship with the God who created us. Which means that it will be a place where all evil is destroyed. Where there is no suffering.

No pain. No abuse. Where bones won't break. Where cancer doesn't exist. Where broken relationships are restored. Where there is no racism.

[23 : 14] No sexism. Where whatever pain you've faced in this life will be reversed. Where every tear will be wiped away. Why? Because relationship with him does away with all of those things as he is the goal.

And that relationship can start today. Notice back in verse 32 of John chapter 6. He says, my father who gives true bread from heaven.

That is present tense. Bread that gives life to the world. We can experience something of the spiritual reality of resurrection today. If we look to him and believe.

You think this bread is going to be your ticket to heaven. And it's not just that. It is so much better. It is resurrection life in relationship with Jesus himself.

So guess who? Well, it must be the bread of life, Jesus. This is where we started. Humans have always cared about what we eat and drink.

[24 : 20] Why? Because we want to live long and happy and healthy lives. In fact, we often think that that is our greatest need and our deepest desire.

Jesus would say that there is something that we need much more. Something actually that we desire much more deeply. To be known and to be loved.

To be loved and to be known. What we need, what we really desire is to be restored to the God who created us. And to live forgiven and free and forever with him.

And this is how we can. Promises at the start, the healthiest bread in the world. Bread that promises eternal life. It's Jesus. You might think that what you want is the we're hungry Jesus who provides for all your physical needs.

You might think that you want to give me some rules, Jesus, that shows you the way how to get there. You might think that you want to do a miracle, Jesus, who reveals himself to you right now.

[25 : 26] But he simply says, see me for who I really am. Come to me. He says, believe in me and you shall have eternal resurrection life with me.

I'm just going to invite the band back up as we close. As I do that, let me just say this one final thing. Would you see him this morning?

Would you come to him this morning? And would you believe in him this morning? Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for all that you have promised us in Jesus today.

Lord, we thank you that he went to the cross in our place. We thank you that he rose again. Showing us that we might do the same.

Lord, we thank you for the simple promise that we can see him and come to him and believe in him. And I pray that you, by your Holy Spirit, would help each of us to do that this morning.

[26 : 37] Lord, help us to understand who he is. And to live in light of who he is. For we pray in his precious name. Amen.

Amen.