

**John 6: 22-35; “I am the Bread of Life”, Sermon # 39 in the series –  
“That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall,  
on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Jesus wanted the people of His day to understand that He was unique among men; that He was a Man sent from God, but that He was more than a man. He came to show all people that the meaning of life is found in His life. Jesus did not simply want people to think that their life consisted of physical earthly considerations and physical earthly well-being, in that day. He wanted people to understand that they had a soul which needed to be saved, and that they could be saved, by feeding upon Him spiritually, as the Bread of Life. The same is true today. Jesus is the bread of life. The Lord Jesus wants each of us who are here this morning to understand this is a truth which pertains to you. You may be laboring for your daily bread, and you may be satisfied simply with eating physical food. You may even be satisfied to come to church on a fairly regular basis. But Jesus would have you know that there is so much more in life, if you will trust in Him as the One who can save you from your sins, and satisfy your soul. Indeed, a blessed life, an eternally blessed life awaits you, if you will give serious consideration to these things that I will present to you in this hour.

I want you to consider 4 things with me. 1<sup>st</sup> – That there are some people who are only interested in laboring for the food that perishes. (verses 22-27) Consider 2<sup>nd</sup> – That these same people often believe in a salvation of works. (verses 28 and 29) Consider 3<sup>rd</sup> – That Jesus is the bread come down from heaven. (verses 30-34) And consider 4<sup>th</sup> – That Jesus is the bread of life. (verse 35) If you will consider these things and see the Lord Jesus in this practical and holy way, then your soul will rejoice in the life that you will find in Him.

**1<sup>st</sup> – Consider with me, that there are some people who are only interested in laboring for the food that perishes.** (verses 22-27)

You will remember that Jesus had sent His apostles across the Sea of Galilee on that evening after He fed the five thousand. Many of the people who witnessed that miracle wanted to make Him king, but when He perceived this, He departed again to the mountain, to be alone; by Himself, to pray about the many things that were a concern to Him as the God-Man. He was concerned that His own apostles would be able to better understand His mission; that they would not have their heads turned by political concerns in relation to the nation of Israel, but that they would see Him as the One who had come into the world to save sinners and to teach them the way to eternal life.

Yes, it was true that He wanted them to understand that He was the Son of God, and that is why He came walking to them on the water, that stormy night. He did want them to behold His power and His glory. And He did not want them to be afraid of all that was coming for themselves in the future. He would strengthen their faith for what lay ahead for them; that is, His own being despised and rejected by men, and yet also, even in the midst of that, He would become the bread of life to many. He knew that his apostles would have their own ministry of preaching the word, after He had died and rose again on their behalf, and so He taught them the things that He did, in this chapter, so that they would understand this truth.

But as we consider the many people who had watched Jesus feed the 5,000 we find that many of them did not understand spiritual things, even though they thought that they did. Jesus’s feeding of the 5,000 had been a sign to them that He was indeed the true Messiah, the One promised in the scriptures, who would come and be their prophet, priest, and king. Many of these people wanted Jesus to be their king, but they did not think of His ruling over them in spiritual terms, but only in earthly and political terms. They did not understand that they were ignorant and that this was why they needed a Prophet to teach them. They did not know

themselves to be guilty sinners and that was why they needed Jesus to be their High Priest and offer Himself for their sins as a sacrifice on the cross. They did not know that they needed Jesus to be a spiritual King to rule over them, and defend them from all of their greatest enemies; the world, flesh, and the Devil. They wanted Jesus to be an earthly king so that all of their personal earthly needs would be met. And if their personal earthly needs were met, the spiritual concerns really did not so much matter to them; not in the way that Christ knew they should matter to them.

These people were very observant of what Jesus was doing. They had seen the apostles get into a boat and row away to the other side of the lake, the previous evening. But they also had observed that Jesus was not on that boat. Therefore, when they came looking for Jesus the next day, they were surprised to find him on the other side, with them, and they say to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?” They didn’t realize that He had gone up on the mountain, alone, to pray, and that He had seen the disciples straining at the oars in the storm, the night before, and that He had then walked across the lake on the sea. They couldn’t understand how He could have gotten across the lake. Even after the miracle of His feeding the 5,000, didn’t understand it as a sign. They did not understand the spiritual implications at all. They did not understand what a great Personage it was that they were dealing with, nor the fact that to really know Him was to have eternal life.

He says to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” He was saying to them that they were seeking Him for the wrong reasons. It wasn’t because they wanted to know and understand the truth of His being the Lord of Life who could show them the meaning of life. It wasn’t that they wanted Him to become their Savior to save them from their sins, and their Prophet to teach them the right way to live according to the Scriptures, the word of God. They were not seeking the way to eternal life; they were only trying to get Him to continuously supply their earthly needs. They sought Him so that they might be fed physically once again, and satisfied in an earthly sense. Some people want to follow Jesus for the wrong reasons. They want a political champion or they simply want someone to feed them.

Let us understand these words in two ways. 1<sup>st</sup> – There are some people who do not like to work to earn their bread. They are busy-bodies in other people’s lives so that they (the people around them) will provide for their needs. But the Bible is very clear that this is not right. It is something which must be repented of. It says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3: 6 – “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.” “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.” “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” “For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. “Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.” “And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.” “Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

These words are very clear, are they not? A man is to work to provide for his own needs and his family’s needs. He is not to be a burden to anyone, and he is to work hard at whatever job he has. If a man will not work; if he thinks that he has some better way of doing things; that is living off of other people, and loafing around, he is actually in sin, and he needs to repent of it. And then, the 2<sup>nd</sup> way that we ought to look at verse 27 of our text is to think of it from the

standpoint of what we actually are laboring for, with our life. For we are told here, by the Lord Jesus, not to have our primary focus in life, on obtaining the food that perishes. We are not to be consumed with laboring for that which does perish, but we are to take pains to labor for the food which endures to eternal life. Each of us needs to ask ourselves, even the Christians among us: What am I laboring for? What am I giving myself to, in the labors of my life? Not the job that you have, but what is your primary focus in what you are striving for, in living your life? Is it simply to make money? Is it to attempt to find only earthly satisfaction and pleasure in the things that you are doing? Or are you really pursuing Christ Himself who is the bread of life? For the food which Jesus is talking about is Himself. He goes on to say that God the Father has set His seal on Him as being this food which endures to eternal life.

**Now, consider 2<sup>nd</sup> – That there are some people, however, who believe in a salvation by their own works.** (verses 28 and 29)

“Verse 28 says – “Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’” “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’” When Christ said, “Labor not for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, His listeners were convinced that there was something that they could do to work the works of God; that is, to be able to do something to please God so that they would be favored by Him. But this is simply the natural man thinking that he has within himself the ability and the means to do that; which will please God. The Bible does not teach this. These people thought of Christ as the teacher who could rightly instruct them on what they could do to obtain eternal life. But Jesus directs them to the right way to please God and find favor with Him. He says: “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” That is the chief labor of one who does not know God yet. It is to believe in Christ whom He has sent. And we can further say that when this good work is begun and engaged in, it is because a person has been spiritually drawn to Christ by the Father. They have been given life and power through the Holy Spirit’s working to see the truth of the gospel, and believe and be saved.

What must I do to be saved?, is a most reasonable question because there is something to do; and that is to believe in Christ in His perfect work, in His finished work. And once you have believed in what Christ has done in living the perfect life and dying on the cross, you should then experience His life at work in your life. You are justified freely through His blood and righteousness. You are sanctified definitively in your being effectually called and regenerated. And you are set apart to God’s holy working by His grace in your now being able to work for Him by going about to keep His commandments, and do good works. And from that vantage point, of Christ’s having done everything necessary for you to find favor with God and to be accepted and acceptable to God, in Him, you will work out your own salvation in fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who is at work in you; both to will and to work according to His good pleasure. You will continue to work at believing in Him. You will continue to learn to trust Him in every situation that you face day by day.

But you must not get the cart before the horse. Your work of learning to do what is right and doing what is right, repenting of all your sins, and loving the brethren, is all because your trust is in the Lord. You don’t do all those things because all of your trust is in yourself and your own strength or ability to do these things. You are not saved by your good works and you do not have the power to live the Christian life from the vantage point of your own strength or inherent righteousness. You labor and work for Christ from the vantage point of all that He has done for you. It is He who has perfectly fulfilled the law. It is he who laid down His life for you as a substitutionary sacrifice. That is what you are trusting in. That is the basis of all of your joy and all of your confidence in your labors. This is what it means to be a true disciple. It is what the apostle Paul means when he says in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1: 2 – “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith,

labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.”

**Consider 3<sup>rd</sup> – That Jesus is this bread come down from heaven.** (verses 30-34)

“Therefore they said to Him, ‘What sign will you perform then, that we may see it and believe You?’ ‘What work will you do?’ ‘Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.’” “For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” “Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, give us this bread always.’” Now truly, this shows the spiritual blindness of the people who were talking to Jesus, because they ought to have been able to see, by His feeding the 5,000, that this was the very sign that should have convinced them to place all their trust in Him. But they still did not understand. The feeding of the 5,000 was a mighty work, and it should have been to them the very sign that they were looking for to convince them that Jesus was the Christ. It says in verse 2 of chapter 6 that “a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.” Some of those people were the very ones who were now asking for another sign. How many more signs did they need?

Well, evidently they thought that they needed more signs than they had been given. They were comparing Christ with Moses, and so they say – “Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” They said this as though it was Moses who had done the miracle of giving the children of Israel bread. But Jesus says to them, Most assuredly Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but God did. And He goes further, and He now declares to them that His Father was the One who had given them the true bread from heaven. Now, let’s see how practical and pertinent this is to the subject that was being discussed. It was God who gave the bread, the manna, this physical bread, which was white like coriander seed, and tasted like wafers made with honey. It sustained their physical life for 40 years during their wilderness wanderings. But this was intended by God to be a type of Christ Himself who came down, not from the visible heavens as the manna did, but it came down from heaven itself. Christ is saying that He is the true bread of heaven and the fulfillment of the type. He was the One who assumed human nature in Mary’s womb, and came down, as sent from the Father, out of love for a sinful world, so that all those chosen by God would obtain spiritual life and food for their souls.

Christ Jesus is the true bread which came down from heaven, and He is the One who gives life to the world. Now, here is a good indication that not every reference to the words, “the world” in the Scriptures, means all and every person in the world. For the way that it is worded here shows us that it is definitely not the case. The life that is given by the bread of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, it says here, is most definitely conveyed to any person who receives it from Christ as His gift. That is how it is worded; The Father gives this true bread and Christ Himself gives the elect sinner this life by His working, not theirs. He doesn’t simply propose that it will be given, or offer it that it might be received, although there is a sincere offer in the gospel; but it in this verse it is something which is most tangibly and certainly conveyed to the soul of the elect sinner so that they will be most definitely saved. Are you not thankful that it is so? Ours is not a hypothetical salvation, but a most certain and definite salvation of elect persons throughout the whole world, in all the generations of the world since Christ died and rose again. The world that is being spoken of here is the all the elect world of those chosen by God; those who have been regenerated and given a New Heart, and this saving work is given in connection with the believer’s spiritually feeding upon Christ in the gospel as it is being preached.

Then in verse 34 comes this amazing request from the lips of some who were listening to Him: “Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, give us this bread always.’” Now we must ask ourselves

whether this was a serious and sincere request on their behalf? Do they really want Christ, the spiritual bread who has come down from heaven, or are they simply saying this in a longing human way: Lord, evermore give us the physical bread, like you did the other day, so that we might be fed physically every day, and not have to work for our bread at all. William Burkitt says, "The commendation of spiritual things may move the affections, and quicken the desires, of natural persons: but if their desires be not spiritual and serious, diligent and laborious, constant and abiding, they are no evidence of the truth of grace." Let us understand that the desires in the hearts of unregenerate men and women run deep. They may hear the good word of God which is the bread of life to them, and you may think that they are actually becoming partakers of spiritual things, when really they are only relating what has been preached to them to their natural, physical, mental, and emotional earthly life. Yes, it is true that the Holy Spirit may indeed be striving with them in common grace when they are convicted of their need of Christ in some general way, but it does not translate into their being convicted of their sins so that they will truly seek the grace of Christ to save them.

This is what accounts for people being religious, and thinking that they are being saved by being religious, or that they think that they are saved because they hang around with other religious people; whether truly saved or unsaved people. They are still not able to understand the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to them, but nevertheless they will even love at times to hear the word of God, unless it comes too close to them, and they find that their carnal and natural life of living to themselves is threatened. And so, when the word does come too close, then they are fearful that they will lose their worldly life; and so we find them, as many of the false disciples in this passage did, finally choosing to walk away from Christ and from the preaching of the word which came too close for their comfort.

But then, I believe that we should also take these words as an indication of a real sincere on the part of some of these people to be saved, and yet they do not exactly know the way to be saved. Let me say to you that a person can have legitimate longings in their heart to know the meaning of life, and have not yet fully understood how to obtain it. They have searched for truth before in all the wrong places, but now the revelation of the truth is coming to them in stages; they are being taught a series of lessons by the Holy Spirit. It has not yet resulted in salvation, and so they pray like these people spoke: "Lord, evermore give us this bread." This may indeed be a true longing in the heart of an unbeliever when the Lord's intention is to save them. When the Holy Spirit is working in saving power and grace, something truly wonderful happens, and He who has come to convict the world, of sin and righteousness and judgment, comes to their heart and creates new desires in their awakening and in their New Birth. "And He when He comes will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." The Spirit, I say, comes and He creates a real longing for the Bread of Life. And then, when that happens, that searching sinner will not be satisfied with anything else until they have Him. This longing is not carnal, but it is intensely spiritual, and the person will really be saved from themselves and from the outcome of living a life to themselves.

It is called Irresistible Grace by the theologians. It is not as though the Spirit cannot be resisted in His striving in Common Grace. But once Christ has been savingly revealed to the soul of a person by the saving power of the Spirit, in accordance with the word of God, His heart is turned to behold the glory and desirability of Christ. Indeed, we should understand that Christ will always be resisted in one fatal point in the minds of those who only have common grace; and that is, their resistance to the absolute necessity of believing in Christ. This was what happened to those wicked men who stoned Stephen. They were always resisting the Holy Spirit. And how were they resisting Him? They were resisting the truth that they must have Jesus in order to be

saved; that they could by no means save themselves from their sins. But that was the thing that they should have repented of; that awful self-sufficiency and false intellectual pride. That is when a person says – I can figure life out for myself. I am smart enough to know what to believe and what not to believe. But the Bible says that unless you humble yourself and become like a little child, you shall not enter the kingdom of God. You cannot be saved until you will pray, “Lord, give me this bread always”, and know that you are asking for that great illumination and salvation which come through Him. Until you pray that way and really mean it, you will not be saved. It will not be saved until you see Christ as the bread come down from heaven; the only One who can feed and strengthen and nourish your hungry soul, that you will find the truth and the truth set you free.

**And then, 4<sup>th</sup> – I want you to consider with me that Jesus is the bread of life.**

(verse 35)

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life.’ “He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” Let us always see these two truths side by side; God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. They are both truth because the Bible declares them to be so. The one does not nullify the other. They co-exist together. He who comes to Christ; that is, comes by faith to believe on Christ, His finished work, and in Christ, in His powerful working which takes place in their heart from the moment that they first believe, shall know His powerful working in their heart so that they will never hunger for any other person or any other religious explanation of life to satisfy them, for they shall be fed and satisfied spiritually by Christ Himself, who is this bread of life. The person who believes in Him shall never thirst. They shall always be satisfied by the grace and spiritual working of Christ in their heart and life; just like a person going to a cool, clear, stream of water and being able to drink.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who can give the water of spiritual and eternal life. No other person can. Revelation chapter 22, verse 7 says: “And the Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’ “And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ “And let him who thirsts come.” “Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” Here we see the free offer of the gospel; the Lord Jesus saying – “Whosoever will, let him come!” Will you not come today, O sinner, if you have never come to Him for salvation? Will you not see that you can take freely of the water of life? You shall not be hindered or prevented to do so, for the cost has all been paid for by Christ. He has done all the work necessary for your salvation, and you shall most definitely have it if you will come to Him for it.

And then, let me say these words in closing to every Christian. Will you not see, O Christian, the great importance of your drinking deeply from the water of life every day? Will you not see the great expectation which Christ your Lord has of you, that you would drink deeply and be satisfied with Him, and not be satisfied with what the world and worldly people have to give? He is the One who once said to you – “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come buy and eat.” “Yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.” “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?” “Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.” He not only was saying that to you when He was inviting you to come and be a partaker of His great salvation; He is still saying that to you each and every day of your Christian walk with Him. He is the One who turns the waters of life into wine for you, the Christian. He is the One who calls out to have communion with you each and every day when He says: “I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.” “Eat, O friends!” “Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!” That is Christ’s longing to have fellowship with you.

