

I don't know about you, but I love bread! Fresh sour-dough straight out of the oven. A warm dinner roll dripping with butter. Garlic bread. French bread. Croissants. Cinnamon rolls. Jalapeno cheese bread. There are few things better than a fresh loaf of bread. Have you ever noticed nobody gets excited when Olive Garden brings the salad? It's always "pass the bread!" And yet bread has one problem—it never lasts. You can sit down to an incredible meal, clean your plate, lean back in your chair completely stuffed, and a few hours later, you're hungry again. That's the thing about bread; it satisfies until it doesn't.

That is true of much more than bread. We convince ourselves that if we could just get the promotion, pay off the debt, find the right relationship, buy the house, or get through this season of life, that will finally satisfy us. And it does for a little while. We feel full and content, but before long, the hunger returns.

Maybe that's because beneath every physical hunger is a deeper hunger. A hunger to be known, loved, to matter, and belong. To know that our lives have purpose. And no matter how much this world offers us, that hunger keeps coming back.

That's exactly where Jesus meets the crowd in John 6. The day before, he had miraculously fed more than five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Their stomachs were full. Their immediate needs had been met, but by the very next day, they were chasing Jesus across the lake looking for another meal. They thought they were hungry for bread. Jesus knew they were hungry for something much deeper. And in one of the most remarkable conversations in all of Scripture, Jesus reveals a truth that is just as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. You become what you continually consume.

As we walk through this conversation between Jesus and the crowd, we are going to wrestle with four questions. They're questions the crowd didn't realize they were asking, but every one of us has to answer. First, what are you really hungry for? Beneath every appetite and pursuit is a deeper longing. Jesus is going to expose that the crowd's greatest need wasn't another meal—it was him.

Second, who will satisfy your hunger? It's one thing to recognize that we're hungry. It's another to discover what can truly satisfy us. Jesus doesn't simply offer another loaf of bread; he offers himself as the Bread of Life. Third, what are you feeding on? Every day we're consuming something. We're allowing our hearts and minds to be shaped by someone or something. The question isn't whether we're being formed, it is what is forming us. Finally, who are you becoming? Because that's where this entire conversation leads. The things we continually feed on eventually shapes the people we become.

What Are You Really Hungry For? (6:25-34)

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 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 and had your fill. John 6:25-26

Have you ever noticed that Jesus almost never answers the question people ask him? The crowd wants to know when he got there. Jesus wants to talk about why they came. He sees right past their words and into their hearts and suggests that they are not really looking for him, they were looking for another meal.

The day before, Jesus had fed more than five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Their stomachs were full. Their immediate needs had been met. Now they've come back hoping he would do it again. Before we're too hard on them, we should admit we'd probably be standing in that crowd too. Because we all tend to confuse our deepest hunger with our most immediate appetite.

We convince ourselves that if we could just get one more thing, we'd finally be satisfied: one more promotion, relationship, accomplishment, purchase, season of life, or one more success. None of those things is necessarily bad, but they make terrible saviors. That's why Jesus says, *"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"* (v. 27).

Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say bread is bad. He doesn't say work is bad. He doesn't even say our physical needs don't matter. He's exposing something much deeper. Jesus isn't criticizing ambition; he's exposing appetite. The crowd is investing all its energy into something that can never satisfy the deepest hunger of the human heart.

The problem wasn't that they were hungry. Hunger is actually a gift because it reminds us that we need something outside of ourselves. The problem was that they had misdiagnosed what they were hungry for. I wonder if that's true for us more often than we'd like to admit.

How often do we mistake loneliness for a need to stay busy? Or anxiety for a need to gain more control? Or insecurity for a need to achieve more? Or exhaustion for a need to simply take another vacation? Sometimes what feels like one hunger is actually pointing to something much deeper. Jesus is inviting the crowd, as well as us, to look beneath our immediate cravings and ask a better question: What am I really hungry for? The crowd still doesn't understand what Jesus is saying. So instead of asking him about their hearts, they ask him for another miracle.

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" vv. 28-31

It's almost unbelievable. Jesus has just fed more than five thousand people, and they're asking for another sign. But they're not simply asking for another miracle. They're comparing Jesus to Moses. In effect, they're saying, "Moses fed Israel for forty years. You fed us once. If you really are the Messiah, prove it."

To understand why the crowd responds this way, we must go back to one of the defining moments in Israel's history, the story of manna in the wilderness. After God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, they found themselves wandering through the desert with no way to provide food. Their stomachs were empty, and they began to grumble against Moses. In response, God graciously provided bread from heaven. Every morning, the Israelites would wake up to find manna covering the ground. They were instructed to gather only enough for that day because tomorrow they would have to trust God all over again.

The manna was more than food; it was a daily lesson in dependence. Every sunrise reminded Israel that life was sustained not by their own efforts but by God's faithful provision. Moses later explained the deeper purpose in Deuteronomy 8:3: *"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna...to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."*

God wasn't simply feeding his people. He was forming his people. He was teaching them that their deepest need wasn't bread; it was trust. The crowd in John 6 remembered the miracle but missed the lesson. They proudly remind Jesus, "Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness." They're essentially saying, "If you really are greater than Moses, then prove it. Give us bread from heaven."

But Jesus gently corrects them. *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" (v. 32).* In other words, they had been looking at the gift when they should have been looking at the Giver. Moses wasn't the source. Manna wasn't the destination. From the very beginning, God was preparing his people for something and someone far greater.

"For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (v. 33). Every piece of manna scattered across the desert floor was pointing beyond itself to the One standing in front of them. The bread in the wilderness is never the destination, Jesus is.

The crowd responds with, "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread'" (v. 34). At first, this sounds like faith. It sounds as though they're finally beginning to understand. But they're still missing Jesus' point. They're still thinking about bread. They're still looking for another miracle, another meal, and another gift from God.

If you've been with us throughout this series, this should sound familiar. A few weeks ago, in John 4, Jesus told the Samaritan woman about living water, and she replied, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." She was thinking about physical water while Jesus was talking about spiritual life. Now the crowd is doing the very same thing. They're thinking about physical bread while Jesus is talking about something much deeper.

That's one of Jesus' favorite ways of teaching us. Again and again, people hear Jesus at the surface level while

he is inviting them into a deeper reality. The crowd is asking for bread. Jesus was about to offer himself.

Who Will Satisfy Your Hunger? (6:35-40)

"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' (v. 35). Everything changed with those next six words: 'I am the Bread of Life.' This is more than an answer to the crowd's request. It is one of the most profound declarations Jesus makes in the entire Gospel of John. The crowd is asking for bread. Jesus is revealing his identity.

Last week, we pointed out something that is incredibly important for understanding John's Gospel. The words Jesus uses are the Greek phrase *egō eimi*—literally, I Am. To us, those may sound like ordinary words, but to every first-century Jew standing in that synagogue, the words would have immediately echoed one of the most sacred moments in Israel's history.

In Exodus 3, Moses stood before the burning bush and asked God, "When the people ask who sent me, what shall I tell them?" God answered, "I Am who I Am." This was God's covenant name, his self-revelation, the eternal, self-existent, ever-present God.

So when Jesus says, "I am the Bread of Life." He isn't simply saying, "I provide bread." He isn't merely saying, "I give life." He is making a breathtaking claim about his identity: The One speaking in the synagogue is the same God who spoke from the burning bush.

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus will make many great *egō eimi* statements, each revealing another facet of his identity. It is no accident that the first one addresses humanity's most basic need. Bread was the staple of everyday life. It wasn't a luxury; it was a necessity. Every family depended on it. Without bread, people didn't survive. Jesus was saying, "What bread is to your body, I am to your soul."

Then notice the shift. The crowd asks for a thing, but Jesus offers a Person. The crowd wants provision, but Jesus offers his presence. The crowd wants another miracle, and Jesus offers himself. That changes everything. That's the entire story of John 6. The crowd wanted bread. Jesus offered himself.

So often, we come to Jesus asking him to fix our circumstances, answer our questions, or solve our problems. None of those are wrong requests, but sometimes, like the crowd, we're asking for bread when Jesus wants to give us something far greater—himself. Perhaps the most searching question in this

passage isn't, "What am I asking Jesus to give me?" It's, "Would Jesus be enough?"

I've been learning that lesson on my porch this year. Many evenings, I walk outside carrying questions I'd love for God to answer. I come wanting answers, direction, and certainty. Yet more often than not, God doesn't give me the answers I'm asking for. Instead, he gives me his presence. The circumstances don't always change. The questions aren't always resolved. But somehow, I leave that porch more settled than when I arrived.

Looking back, I've realized what my soul needed most wasn't a plan, it was Jesus. That's exactly what the crowd is being invited to discover. Jesus isn't merely offering bread that satisfies for a day. He's offering himself as the Bread that satisfies forever.

Then he makes one of the most beautiful promises in all of John's Gospel: "Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus isn't promising a life free from grief or disappointment. He's speaking to the deepest hunger of the human heart: the longing to be known, loved, forgiven, secure, and fully alive in God. That hunger can only be satisfied in him.

And then comes another remarkable promise: *"But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (vv. 36-37).* What a promise! No matter where you've been, no matter what you've done, or how many times you've wandered, if you come to Jesus, he will never turn you away.

And notice why. *Jesus immediately says, "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (v. 38).* This isn't Jesus simply being compassionate in the moment. This is why he came. The Father's heart has always been to gather lost people home. Jesus didn't come looking for reasons to reject people. He came looking for people to rescue. He didn't simply come to give bread. He came to be the Bread of Life.

The invitation has been given. Jesus has revealed himself as the Bread of Life. But revelation always demands a response. And the crowd's response exposes the next question we all have to answer.

What Are You Feeding On? (6:41-51)

As soon as Jesus declares, "I am the Bread of Life," the mood in the synagogue changes. John tells us that the crowd begins to grumble. That word should sound

familiar because John intentionally wants us to think about Israel in the wilderness. Just as God's people grumbled against Moses after receiving manna from heaven, this crowd is now grumbling against the One who is standing before them as the true Bread from heaven. Their circumstances have changed. Their hearts have not changed.

At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" vv. 41-42

Their familiarity with Jesus keeps them from seeing Jesus. Before we're too hard on them, I wonder if we do the very same thing. Many of us have spent years in church. We've heard the stories. We know the songs. We know the language. But familiarity is not the same thing as intimacy. It is possible to know about Jesus and still miss Jesus.

This takes me back to the very beginning of John's Gospel. The religious leaders came to John the Baptist and asked who he was. What has always struck me is how clear John the Baptist was. He knew exactly who he was because he knew exactly who Jesus was. John wasn't the Messiah. He wasn't Elijah. He wasn't the Prophet. He was simply a voice preparing the way for Christ.

Here in John 6, we meet another group of people trying to answer that same question. But unlike John the Baptist, they keep getting Jesus wrong. They see a miracle worker. A bread king. A new Moses. They know his hometown. They know his family. But they don't really know him. That raises the question: Who is Jesus to you? Because how we answer that question shapes what we feed on. And what we continually feed on shapes who we become.

A few weeks ago, I was sitting on the porch looking out over the waterway in front of my house. After several warm days, the water wasn't moving much, so algae had begun collecting on the surface. Small pieces of debris had become trapped in places that normally would have drifted away. Left alone, the algae-filled water naturally collected things that didn't belong there. No one put the algae there. It simply grew because the water was stagnant; it wasn't moving.

I couldn't help but wonder if our hearts work much the same way. Left unattended, our hearts rarely drift toward Jesus. They drift somewhere else. Little by

little, day by day, what we continually allow into our lives begins shaping who we become. You become what you continually consume.

Every day, we are feeding our souls. Every day, something is shaping us. Every day, our loves, desires, and imaginations are being formed. The question isn't whether you're being formed. The question is what are you feeding on?

No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. vv. 46-49

Jesus answers by returning to the story of manna. Manna was a remarkable gift, but it was never meant to be the destination. It pointed beyond itself. *Then Jesus says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (v. 51).* The manna sustained life for a day. Jesus gives life forever. The manna filled empty stomachs. Jesus fills empty souls. Everything God had been doing throughout Israel's history was preparing his people for this moment.

The Bread of Life had finally come. The tragedy is that many people were so busy looking for another loaf of bread that they completely missed the One standing in front of them. Which begs the question:

Who Are You Becoming (John 6:52–59)

By the time we arrive at verse 52, the conversation has reached a breaking point. What began as a discussion about bread has become a confrontation over the identity of Jesus. *"Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" (v. 52).* Honestly, we understand their confusion. To first-century Jewish ears, these words would have sounded shocking—even offensive. The Law strictly prohibited consuming blood, and the very idea of eating someone's flesh and drinking their blood would have been unthinkable. If we had been standing in that synagogue, we probably would have had the same reaction.

But if you've been with us throughout John's Gospel, this shouldn't surprise us. Again and again, people hear Jesus on a physical level while he is speaking about a spiritual reality. Nicodemus heard "born again" and thought about another physical birth. The Samaritan woman heard "living water" and thought

about a well. Now the crowd hears “eat my flesh” and immediately thinks Jesus is talking about cannibalism.

One of the things I love about John’s Gospel is that Jesus is always inviting people beneath the surface. He takes ordinary, everyday things—bread, water, birth, light, vines—and uses them to reveal deeper spiritual realities. I wonder if he’s doing the same thing with us today? Maybe beneath the hunger for our success is a hunger to be secure? Beneath our craving for approval is a longing to be fully known. Beneath our desire for control is a deeper invitation to trust.

Jesus is always moving us beneath the surface. People get stuck on the physical, while Jesus invites them to see the spiritual. And that’s exactly what’s happening here. What’s remarkable is Jesus doesn’t soften his language. He doesn’t stop and say, “You’ve misunderstood me.” Instead, he leans into the imagery.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you’ (v. 53). Why would Jesus choose such graphic language? Because he’s inviting them to understand something much deeper than bread. Throughout Scripture, eating is one of the most intimate pictures of receiving something into yourself. Food doesn’t simply sit beside us for us to admire. We take it in. It nourishes us. It sustains us. It becomes part of us. It gives us strength for life. Jesus isn’t inviting admiration. He’s inviting you to participate in his life.

That’s why Jesus chooses such startling language. He’s describing complete dependence. He’s saying that faith is far more than believing certain truths about him. Faith is receiving his life so deeply that it becomes the source of our own.

There’s another fascinating detail hidden in the Greek text. Up to this point, John has been using the ordinary Greek word for “eat.” But beginning in verse 54, Jesus changes verbs. He uses the word *trōgō*, which literally means to chew, to gnaw, or to keep feeding on. It’s an earthy, almost uncomfortable word. I think that’s intentional. Jesus isn’t describing a single meal or a one-time decision. He’s describing an ongoing way of life. Keep feeding on me. Keep receiving your life from me. Keep depending on me. Then Jesus says something extraordinary:

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats

my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. vv. 54–56

The goal isn’t eating. The goal is relationship. The goal is union with Christ. Eating is the metaphor. The relationship is the reality. John uses the word *menō*—to remain, to abide, to make your home. It’s one of his favorite words in the entire gospel. It describes a life of continual communion with Jesus. It is not visiting him occasionally or checking in with him once a week, but making our home in him, and discovering that he has made his home in us.

These words certainly point us toward the Lord’s Table, where we remember Christ’s body broken and his blood poured out for us. But they also point beyond Communion to a deeper reality. Every time we come to the Table, we’re reminded that Christianity isn’t merely remembering Christ; it is continually receiving our life from Christ.

This is one of the deepest invitations in all of John’s Gospel. Jesus isn’t inviting us to admire him from a distance, he isn’t inviting us to imitate him through sheer effort, he’s inviting us to participate in his very life. The answer to the question, “Who are you becoming,” is found in who you continually feed on.

So where does all of this leave us? Over the past thirty-five verses, Jesus has asked us four searching questions. What are you really hungry for? Who will satisfy your hunger? What are you feeding on? Who are you becoming? Now Jesus leaves us with an invitation. What does it look like to feed on Jesus daily?

Come to Jesus

Jesus begins with a simple invitation: “Whoever comes to me will never go hungry.” Notice where the Christian life begins. It begins with coming, not with performance, proving yourself, or pretending you’ve got everything together. Jesus never says, “Get your life together, then come.” He simply says, “Come.” Come with your questions, doubts, grief, failures, addictions, exhaustion, and hunger.

One of the greatest lies we believe is that maturity means needing Jesus less. The opposite is true. The longer we follow Christ, the more deeply we recognize how desperately we need him. The Christian life doesn’t begin with striving. It begins with surrender.

Remain in Jesus

Jesus continues, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.” Remember that beautiful word John uses—*menō*. Remain.

Abide. Make your home. Jesus isn't inviting us to visit him once a week. He's inviting us to make our home in him. That's why the habits we've been learning together as a church matter so much.

Prayer, Scripture, Sabbath, Silence, Hospitality, and Open-handedness are not ways of earning God's love. We practice these things because we need Jesus today just as much as we needed him yesterday. They are simply ways of placing ourselves before the Bread of Life. Just as Israel gathered manna every morning, we return to Jesus every day—not because yesterday's time with him wasn't enough, but because every day brings new needs, new temptations, new questions, and a fresh opportunity to receive his grace.

I've discovered that on the porch this year. Most days, God doesn't give me all the answers I'm looking for. He gives me himself. And I've learned his presence is always a greater gift than my preferred outcome.

Become Like Jesus

Over the past few weeks, I've been reading David G. Benner's book *Sacred Companions*. One of the central themes of the book is that spiritual formation isn't merely believing the right things about Jesus, it's learning to receive life from Jesus until his life begins to shape ours.

I love that phrase: receive life from Jesus, because that's exactly what Jesus has been inviting us to do throughout this entire chapter. The crowd wanted bread. Jesus offered himself, which is still his invitation today. If we're not careful, we can hear all of this and think Jesus is giving us another spiritual to-do list—read your Bible more, pray more, try harder—but that's not his invitation at all. Jesus isn't saying, "Feed on me so you'll become a better person." He says, "Feed on me because I am your life."

As we continually receive his life, something beautiful begins to happen. His peace begins replacing our anxiety. His humility begins replacing our pride. His compassion begins to replace our indifference. His generosity begins replacing our grasping. Over time, we become like the One we continually receive. Not because we are trying harder, but because his life is slowly becoming our life.

Which brings us back to where we started. Tomorrow morning, every one of us is going to wake up hungry. We'll make breakfast because that's what hungry people do. We feed our bodies every day. But what about our souls?

Before you feed your body tomorrow morning, feed your soul. The Christian life is not about trying harder. It's about receiving more deeply. Come to Jesus. Remain in Jesus. Become like Jesus. Because you become what you continually consume. Jesus offered himself, and 2000 years later, he still does.