

JOHN 6: 41-69  
Food for My Soul

Pastor Bill and I met recently for a chit-chat. The result of that conversation is this morning's message. In the past, when Pastor Bill has asked me to fill in on a Sunday morning, he has given me freedom to choose the passage and topic. As we concluded our conversation, he suggested that I share a message that would encourage everyone to get into the Word – to dig deeper into the Word.

We have read from John 6. Let's go back and look at 2 verses:

John 6:63 ***It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.***

John 6:68 ***Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.***

This morning I want us to consider 3 important qualities about the Word of God. John tells us that the words of Jesus are spirit. They are life. And they are eternal life.

First, I want to give some background. We could have taken the time to read all of John 6. But, it is long. I prefer that you read it on your own. But we can do a quick review.

The passage begins with an important statement:

John 6: 4 ***Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. 5 Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" 6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.***

Jesus intended to feed the 5,000.

You have probably heard that when you see the word "therefore", the verses that follow show what it is there for. The Feast of Passover was near. "Therefore" ties the Passover feast to all that follows in John, chapter 6. The Passover was also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And bread becomes very important throughout the chapter.

Let's follow the progression of the chapter....

"Therefore" ties the celebration and meaning of the Passover to the Feeding of the 5,000.

The Feeding of the 5,000 allows Jesus to question the motives of the crowd for following Him.

***26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."***

When Jesus speaks these words, these crowd brings up manna. They demand that Jesus provide a sign that will verify His claim.

<sup>30</sup> So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?" <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat

In response to their request, Jesus declares ....

**32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.**

Jesus then tells the crowd they must eat His body and drink His blood

**<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."**

The crowd is repulsed and many refuse to follow Jesus from that moment.

Note the disconnect throughout the chapter. In John 6, Jesus is broadcasting in FM. The crowd has their tuner set to the AM. Jesus is speaking in FM. The crowd is listening in AM.

- Jesus talks about spiritual things.                      The crowd is focused on physical thing.
- Jesus talks about bread from heaven.                      The crowd wants bread for their hungry bellies.
- Jesus performs a tremendous miracle. He feeds a crowd of 5,000 men, plus women and children with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish.
- The next day, as if nothing had happened the previous day, the crowd demands a sign to verify that Jesus came down from heaven.
- Jesus speaks in figurative terms.
- The crowd sees things in physical terms and takes the words of Jesus literally.
- Jesus talks about commitment. Eat my body. Drink my blood. Share My life. Share my sufferings. Share my glory forever.
- They are repulsed. They don't want commitment. They want Jesus to make their lives easy and satisfy their physical needs.
- The crowd wants to make Jesus their king – by force.

Jesus quietly sneaks away to a lonely place on a mountain.

How can Jesus and the crowd stand so close together and yet be so far apart ?

John 6:63,68 help us understand how a chasm so vast can exist between Jesus as He speaks and the crowd as they miss the message. I can't think of a better way to illustrate the situation than to say again, "Jesus is broadcasting in FM. The crowd is tuned in to AM".

Are things any different today? How many people are truly tuned in to Jesus? Are we as concerned about our souls as we are about our bodies?

## 1. The words of Jesus are spirit (John 6:63)

To understand the statement, I think that we have to go all the way back to the beginning of time.... back to Creation. With one exception, God created everything by "fiat".

Hebrews 11:3 ***By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible***

During the 6 days of Creation, God spoke and things came into being. Light, the sky, the oceans and land, plants & trees, the sun, moon and stars, fish & birds, animals and creatures on land. Genesis tells us for each act of Creation, God said, "Let there be..... and it was so"

But when God created man, He did not speak.

Genesis 2: 7 ***Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.***

God creative act distinguishes us from every other aspect of Creation. You can divide Genesis 2:7 into 4 actions: (1) Man was "formed by God". (2) God breathed into Adam's nostrils. (3) God gave him the breath of life and (4) Adam became a "living being". We have a soul. That soul comes from God at the moment of conception.

Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 ***5 Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. 6 Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; 7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.***

Is this significant? Absolutely. If we are created by an all-wise and all-powerful God, then we have purpose. God never does anything that is random. We have values because God is holy. And life has meaning because God made us to enjoy fellowship with Him forever.

If that is not true, then we have no purpose. There are no absolute values to live by. Life has no meaning. Del Tackett, in the series "The Truth Project" refers to this type of man as "Goo-man". This is man that emerged from mud and slime by chance. Goo-man is an accident who has nothing to live for but himself. He has no purpose because he . Goo-man has nothing to look forward to because there is nothing beyond this life. Oh, how dismal and depressing !

The Bible teaches that we live on 2 levels. We exist on a physical level. We eat. Sleep. Exercise. Work. Play. Make friends. Build homes. Have families. Make plans for retirement.

But, we also exist on a spiritual level. If God created us as spiritual beings, if we have the breath of life within us, then the spiritual being within us needs and deserves attention and care too.

Jesus dealt with this issue in John 6:

John 6: 27 ***Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.***

To the non-believer, there is no problem. With no way to comprehend his spiritual need the unbeliever goes through life indulging the physical. But to the believer, this creates a challenge. The challenge becomes to live on two levels with equilibrium. The struggle becomes how to dedicate the proper amount of time and attention to the physical and the proper amount of time and attention to the spiritual.

Which does man prefer to nourish and care for? Which does man make the priority? The physical.

But Jesus said, "My words are spirit".

There is some debate over whether the word "spirit" in John 6:63 should start with a capital S or a small S. I think either way we are safe.

If the words of Jesus are Spirit, that would indicate that they originate from the Holy Spirit. None of us would have a problem with that since a capital S would agree with

2 Timothy 3:16 – ***All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; .***

The NIV translates the verse.... "All Scripture is God-breathed". Isn't that interesting ? The word of God is "God-breathed". When God made Adam, he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life". It seems clear that if there is nutrition for the body, then there is also nutrition for the soul.

John 6:35,36 <sup>35</sup> ***Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.***

If we prefer the word "spirit" with a small S, then you conclude that Scripture has to be understood on a spiritual level with the help of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 2:12-16 ***12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.***

We have the words of Christ. We have the Spirit of Christ. We have the mind of Christ.

Then, why, sometimes, is it such a struggle to feed our souls as well as we feed our bodies? Why is it so easy to take care of our physical and ignore the spiritual?

## 2. The words of Jesus are life.

If the words of Jesus are given for the benefit of our souls, then we should ask, “Can we live the way God intends for us to live without caring for the spiritual aspect of our lives?” I think that is what we call a rhetorical question. The answer is, obviously, “no”.

Do you remember the Temptation of Jesus? How did Jesus respond when He was tempted to use His power to turn stones into bread ? But look at the same words in context....

Deuteronomy 8:2-4 ***2 You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. 4 Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.***

God gave Israel manna to satisfy their physical hunger. Every morning they would leave their tents and gather enough for a day. On Friday, they would gather enough for 2 days since God did not send manna on the Sabbath. Their bellies were satisfied.

As Israel camped in the wilderness, every day a cloud stood over the Tabernacle. God was there ! Every night a pillar of fire stood over the Tabernacle. God was in their midst. When they were on the move, the cloud led them by day; the pillar of fire led them by night. God was without them constantly.

Did anyone ever think; “God is so close, I want to know more about Him” ? When Moses came out the Tent of Meeting and his face was glowing, what did the children of Israel do? They ran. The people cowered in fear. And Moses had to cover his face with a veil. The children of Israel complained a lot in the wilderness journey. Did anyone ever complain that they couldn’t get close to God? Did anyone think, “Hey – I want Moses has?”

God humbled them to teach them. Did they understand the lesson? Did they comprehend that if God daily met their physical needs that His presence in the camp indicated that they also had spiritual needs? Unfortunately, most missed the lesson. Most were simply happy to have their bellies full. There was little desire to know God and fellowship with God.

After Jesus fed the 5,000, did the crowd react differently to Jesus? Incarnate God was in their midst. All they wanted was more food.

Today, are people more preoccupied today with their physical needs or their spiritual needs?

John 10:10 ***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.***

Jesus said, “The words that I speak to you are life”. Can we achieve the life that Jesus offers without making the Word a part of our lives?

There are lots of verses that tell us how important the Word is to our lives. Here are a few that you probably know.

*Psalm 1: 1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

*Psalm 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.*

*Psalm 119:11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.*

Treasure ? There is a passage in the New Testament that describes the Word in the same way....

**2 Corinthians 4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;***

Here is one that you may not know....

**Philippians 2:15 *15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.***

Paul sets out 4 goals for the believers in Philippi....

- to be blameless 2- to be innocent 3- to be above reproach in a sinful world 4- to be light.

How would does Paul tell the Philippians to achieve these goals? By holding fast to the word of life.

Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you are life".

**Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.***

As we bring the living Word into our lives, we align ourselves up with God's will and purpose for our lives.

### **3. Words of Jesus are eternal life**

Peter was always quick to speak. He didn't always get things right. Twice he hit the nail on the head.

**Matthew 16:15-17 *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.***

Once again, Jesus challenges His disciples with a question: <sup>67</sup> *So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"* <sup>68</sup> *Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.* <sup>69</sup> *We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."*

Peter may have been the only one who was listening as Jesus spoke throughout John 6. In Matthew 16, God revealed to Peter who Jesus was. It looks like this time he figured it out on his own.

<sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you,

<sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is <sup>34</sup> that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

<sup>40</sup> For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

<sup>50</sup> This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

<sup>54</sup> He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

<sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

Jesus challenged the crowd to commitment. They turned away. Jesus made the requirements clear, "Unless you drink my blood and eat my flesh". Is this so strange? Jesus repeatedly hid the meaning of a message in parables so that only those who had ears to hear would comprehend. When they crowd turned away, they showed how far they were from understanding – how far they were from making a true commitment to Jesus.

But Peter got it. For the moment, Peter was tuned into FM. Peter understood that there is more to life than what can be seen. Jesus hope. And that hope is found in His Word.

Matthew Henry "Whither shall we go?

Shall we make our court to the world? It will certainly deceive us.

Shall we return to sin? It will certainly destroy us.

Shall we leave the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns?" The disciples resolve to continue their pursuit of life and happiness, and will have a guide to it, and will adhere to Christ as their guide, for they can never have a better.

"Shall we go to the heathen philosophers, and become their disciples? They are become vain in their imaginations, and, professing themselves to be wise in other things, are become fools in religion. Shall we go to the scribes and Pharisees, and sit at their feet? What good can they do us who have made void the commandments of God by their traditions? Shall we go to Moses? He will send us back again to thee. Therefore, if ever we find the way to happiness, it must be in following thee."

Luke 24: 25-34

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the [f]Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning [g]with Moses and [h]with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. 28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day [i]is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from [j]their sight. 32 They said to one another, "[k]Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was [l]explaining the Scriptures to us?" 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

In closing I will ask 2 questions:

1. Would you like to have what Moses had? Can you imagine being that close to Jesus?
2. Would you like to experience what the 2 disciples felt while Jesus spoke? Their hearts burned as they listened to His words.