

**John 6:60-71**  
**(Isaiah 11:1-2; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16)**  
**“Bread of Life III”**

## **Introduction**

We come to the end of our study of John 6, a chapter that marks a transition in Jesus' ministry from the height of his popularity to a point where he sits alone with his twelve disciples asking whether they also want to abandon him. This chapter demands that we ask ourselves whether or not we have understood the radical nature of Jesus' call to discipleship a call so radical that Jesus states quite clearly that only God's grace can enable us to hear his call and follow him.

This morning we will ask again those two questions that Jesus asks throughout this chapter knowing that they would cause the crowds disappear, the hangers-on to turn away, and even most of those who had called themselves his disciples to turn back from following him. The first question is this: Are you wasting your life chasing after food that perishes? If you are not sure, then the second question should make it clear: Are you pursuing the Bread of Life, unwilling to be satisfied with anything less than the food that gives eternal life? What must we understand in order to answer those two questions?

## **Body**

1. **Are you quite certain this morning that you are not wasting your life chasing after what Jesus calls the food that perishes?**

### **The Evangelical Danger: Studying God's Word is not enough (5:37-39)**

There have never been such Bible students and scholars as the Pharisees. Many of them knew the entire OT by heart. They treasured not only the words, but the letters, investing the letters with meaning. They so feared violating the least command that they would not speak God=s covenant name, but said either Adonai or Ha Shem. So, too, they fenced the law round to keep from even getting close to danger. In the process, they broke the law, which is all about one thing: God=s love for us and ours for him, and for each other.

That's all the law is about, a picture of a life of love, but by making it a list of rules to be kept, they missed the relationship.

So, too, in our day, so many evangelicals diligently study the Bible as if preparing for an exam. They seek understanding; they diagram sentences and memorize lexical meaning of key words. They delight in a sense of mastery: Now I understand the meaning of Isaiah. They do not realize that God is speaking to them all the while through the word saying, Do you see my Son? This is about him. If you miss him, you=ve missed the whole thing.

### **The Charismatic Danger: Experiencing the Spirit's power is not enough (6:26-29).**

These folk have seen the loaves and fish multiplied, have tasted the miracle and

rejoiced. Now, they want more, miraculous bread every day. They have been taught to pray, Give us today our daily bread, but their eyes are too blind to realize the sheer miracle of the cosmos and of God=s ordinary, providential care of this world, the care of the one who sends sun and rain on the righteous and unrighteous alike. Because they are blind to what the sign points to, they have no benefit from seeing and tasting the power of the Spirit.

### **The Mainstream Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Danger: Church membership is not enough (6:60f).**

There were many numbered among the disciples, who claimed Jesus as their leader, who looked as if they were following him. But by the end of chapter six, we see them leaving him in droves. So, too, today, when his word cuts close to our true passions and desires, we decide whether or not to follow on, thinking that we can reject him and still have him, that we can go our own way, and still hear him say, Well done! Often when I ask people to tell me of their spiritual journey, what they tell me is a history of their church membership. Important as it is for Christian life, growth and service to be a part of a local congregation, in itself it is not enough.

## **2. Are you quite certain this morning that you are seeking nothing less than the Bread of Life?**

### **Feasting on the living Word of God (6:47f).**

Look at how arrestingly Jesus says this. He is so intent that we understand this, that he risks massive misunderstanding. Some think that he is describing cannibalism. But he is talking about the most intimate union with him. He is, as Earl Palmer has said, not the cake of life some attractive added extra. He is rather the barley bread, the one basic essential to life. We live on him, feed on him daily, or we die spiritually. The hunger and thirst which each of us knows, is our longing for him. Apart from a vibrant relationship with Jesus, our deepest hunger and thirst will never be satisfied.

### **Living by the power of the Holy Spirit (6:63).**

It is not enough to experience the Spirit=s power. We need the new life that the Spirit brings. We need to understand life through the mind of the Spirit. We can only understand God=s Word by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit convicts us of sin and enables us to believe and receive new life. The Spirit gives us the gifts we need in order to live the life for which we were created, and then empowers us to use those gifts. The Spirit is nothing less than Christ living in and through us.

### **Following Jesus no matter what others may do (6:68).**

It is not enough to be members of a church or members of a band of disciples: We must be members of the Body of Christ, in union with Christ and with one another. When our dreams and passions, our friends and leaders are turning away and bidding us join them, our hearts must cling to Jesus. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know,

that you are the Holy One of God (6:68-69). Is this the cry of your heart when tempted to lie or cheat, when threatened with depression or fear? When lust and ambition rise up within your heart, the passion to get even or to exalt yourself, does another voice, more compelling say, To do this is to deny him, to leave the one who loved me and gave himself for me. Lord, to whom shall I go? If I lose you, I lose all worth having. If I flee from you, I flee from all that can satisfy the longings of my heart. You alone have the words of life. You alone are the bread of life?

## **Conclusion**

All this, of course, is beyond our natural ability. But, as we have seen, Jesus reminds us that salvation is all of grace: All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father (6:37&65).

So, if your heart is cold, cry out to him to pour out his Holy Spirit on you and awaken within you a longing to be all that you were created to be. Ask him to make you new. If you are a child of God, but have not been living as if you were, cry out to him for forgiveness and a new beginning. No matter how badly you have messed things up, your life can begin again here and now, if you will turn to him for the grace that he freely gives to those who ask. But know that even your longing for him, even your turning and crying out to him are themselves a gift of his majestic grace.

Then follow him whatever comes, no matter what those around you choose to do. And live in the confidence and humility of knowing that he will never leave you nor forsake you, that he will use you to build the part of his kingdom that he has uniquely equipped you to build, and that although others may not ever take notice of the work he does through you he sees and delights in every one of his children, and will one day greet you with the words, Well done, good and faithful servant!

© John M. Wood, all rights reserved