

# Exalting Jesus Christ

## "Bread from Heaven"

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. Last week in our studies of the gospel of John we remember how Jesus had miraculously fed five thousand with just a few loaves and fish.
  - A. But as we continue through the sixth chapter of John we find Jesus using that occasion to teach the people a valuable lesson.
    1. Physical hunger can only be satisfied with physical food.
    2. But there is a deeper hunger in the pit of the soul of men and women that only spiritual food can fill.
  - B. What Jesus told the masses that followed Him was not received well.
    1. Jesus told them they had not come to Him because they had seen the signs He had performed – signs that proved He was the Son of God.
    2. They had come to Him because He had satisfied their physical hunger by feeding everyone from the five loaves and two fish.
      - a. Even though they were perishing from spiritual hunger, all they could think about was satisfying their physical hunger.

3. These words of Jesus seemed to echo similar words spoken by the prophet Isaiah to the people in his day who also were perishing from spiritual hunger.
    - a. **Isaiah 55:2** – *"Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?"*
    - b. The people in Isaiah's day thought the spiritual emptiness in their lives could be satisfied with material things – when in fact their hunger could only be satisfied by the Lord Himself.
- III. Therefore, as we continue our studies through the gospel of John, entitled "Glorifying Jesus Christ," we come to this section of the sixth chapter of John where Jesus boldly declares Himself to be "The Bread From Heaven."
- A. The feeding of the five thousand in the first part of John 6 allowed Jesus to vividly demonstrate His power and deity.
    1. Just as Jesus demonstrated His power over creation in turning water into wine in John chapter 2, He now demonstrates His power over creation by taking five small barley loaves and two small fish and feeding five thousand hungry followers.
    2. No wonder they followed Jesus - He was the miracle worker.
      - a. Where else could they find such an abundance of food?

3. So it comes as no surprise that when their hunger returned the next day, they went looking for Jesus.
  - a. But what happens when Jesus tells the thousands who came to him that He has no intention of filling their physical hunger?
  - b. What happens when Jesus tells them that He has come into the world to provide a different kind of bread – a bread that can fill their deepest spiritual need?
4. Let's turn to the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of John to find out.

**BODY:**

- I. The miraculous feeding of the five thousand raises some important issues.
  - A. As we mentioned earlier, the crowd's motive for seeking Jesus was not what it should have been.
    1. Jesus said: **John 6:26** – *"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."*
      - a. They had come to Him because He satisfied their physical hunger by feeding everyone from the five loaves and two fish.
      - b. Therefore, Jesus urged the masses of people to readjust their priorities.

2. Jesus continued: **John 6:27** – *"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."*
  - a. Jesus had all the credentials of the God-sent Messiah – God's seal was on Him.
  - b. The miracles Jesus had performed were God's seal of authentication that Jesus was, indeed, the very Son of God.
  - c. But the people had come to Jesus seeking the wrong kind of food.
  - d. Their entire focus had been on *"the food that perishes"* and not on *"the food which endures to everlasting life."* (v. 27) – a food that only Jesus can provide.
3. This reminds us of a similar statement Jesus had made to a Samaritan woman in John chapter 4 – except on that occasion Jesus was talking about living water.
  - a. **John 4:13-14** – *"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."*

- B. Jesus wanted the people to understand there are two kinds of food and drink, just as there are two different ways hunger and thirst can be satisfied.
1. Physical food and water can easily satisfy physical hunger and thirst.
  2. But they are totally ineffective in satisfying the deepest longings of the soul – only spiritual food and water can do that.
  3. Unfortunately, the crowds that had come seeking Jesus were more interested in their stomachs than in their hearts. They were more interested in the here and now than in the hereafter.
- C. Let me pause here to make a point – just so no one misunderstands.
1. We all need physical food and drink to take care of our physical needs.
  2. But sometimes we forget that the pursuit of fulfilling our physical needs is not where we should be placing our emphasis as disciples of Christ.
  3. In the Sermon on the Mount:
    - a. Jesus said: **Matthew 6:25** – *"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"*

- b. Then He added: **Matthew 6:31-33** – *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*
- 4. Perhaps we should take a moment and examine our own worries – our own anxieties.
  - a. Do you work for *"the food which endures to everlasting life"* (**cf. John 6:27**), or do you *"worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on"* (**cf. Matthew 6:25**)?
- 5. Remember, in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus taught that the seed which fell among the thorns: **Matthew 13:22** – *". . . is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful."*
  - a. When our lives become so preoccupied with taking care of and securing our physical needs (and wants), we can be absolutely certain that our spiritual needs will suffer.
  - b. Jesus said that – not me.

- II. Upon hearing Jesus tell them that they have been seeking Him for the wrong reasons, the crowd responds with a question.
  - A. At first, their question seems to indicate a sincere desire to do the right thing.
    - 1. **John 6:28-29** – *Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."*
    - 2. Jesus wanted them put their focus back on Him as the Messiah – the Son of God – not on what they needed to do to ensure they could continue being fed physically.
      - a. They needed to place their faith in Him because He had been sent into the world by God.
  - B. Unfortunately, the crowd reacts with skepticism – they wanted to see more signs, more evidence of the deity of Jesus. And the evidence they wanted to see was more food.
    - 1. **John 6:30-31** – *Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*

2. Recalling the stories about Moses and the children of Israel in the wilderness, the crowd moves from asking Jesus to simply prove His deity to challenging Jesus to top the feeding of the Israelites with manna.
    - a. In essence, they were saying, "If you're really who you say you are, then prove it by doing something greater than simply giving us manna like Moses have our forefathers."
  3. But Jesus made it clear Moses wasn't responsible for the manna in the wilderness – God was the provider.
    - a. The bread God gave was a gift – whether it came in the shape of manna, or whether it came in the shape of the Messiah.
  4. However, the crowd was more concerned with their physical hunger pangs than they were about their spiritual hunger – all they wanted was another loaf of bread.
    - a. Essentially, they were telling Jesus, "You can keep your 'abundant life,' just give us an abundance of bread."
    - b. **John 6:34** – *Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."*
- C. But Jesus turns the focus back on Himself as the only solution to their greatest need.



1. **John 6:35-40** – *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. 36 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

*39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. 40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."*

2. There are several things Jesus wanted these people – and us – to understand.

- a. First, Jesus is the only One who can fill our deepest spiritual needs. He said, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."* **(v. 35)**

- (1). Only Jesus can satisfy the hunger and thirst in our souls.

In fact, He satisfies it in such a way that our souls will never hunger and thirst again.

- (2). If there is an emptiness – a hunger and thirsting – in your soul, I can guarantee that it's because you've been trying to satisfy that hunger and thirst with the things of this world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life.
  - (3). No wonder you're starving spiritually.
  - (4). You need to do what Jesus told these people to do – to come to Him in faith.
- b. Second, Jesus wanted these people to know that those who come to Him in faith will never have to worry about being rejected. He said, *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."* **(v. 37)**
- (1). No one is rejected! No one is turned away! No one is cast out!
  - (2). Jesus accepts those who are morally good, as well as those who are morally corrupt – He never turns away anyone who comes to Him hungering and thirsting for the spiritual contentment and satisfaction He provides.
- c. And third, Jesus wanted the people – and us – to know that He alone is able to guarantee us a home in heaven. He said,

*"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. 40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."* (vs. 39-40)

- (1). This passage is often misused to teach the false doctrine of once-saved-always saved. But that's not what Jesus is saying here.
  - (2). He promises that He will never lose us – He will never allow us to accidentally slip away.
  - (3). If we're lost it will be because we turn away from Him. It will be because we abandon and desert Him, and turn back to the world from which we came.
  - (4). But if we remain faithful, Jesus not only guarantees that we will have everlasting life, but He also guarantees that we will be raised up at the last day to spend an eternity with Him in heaven.
- D. You would think these people would have realized Who was speaking to them – they had seen the miracles Jesus performed, but when He claimed He had come down from heaven, they grew angry.

1. **John 6:41-42** – *The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." 42 And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"*
    - a. The common belief in that day was that the Messiah would be a man – a man just like David or Solomon.
    - b. They believed God would send this Messiah to bring Israel back to its former state of glory as a nation.
    - c. And they believed this Messiah would miraculously provide for all the physical and material needs of the people.
  2. Of course, that wasn't the kind of Messiah Jesus had come to be.
    - a. So, while they might accept Jesus as the Messiah they certainly didn't accept Him as divine – they didn't accept Him as the Son of God who had come down from heaven.
    - b. They could only see Jesus the man, not Jesus the Son of God.
- E. But despite this rejection, Jesus graciously extends His offer again.
1. **John 6:43-51** – *Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. 44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the*

*last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. 47 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*

2. Again, there are several key points Jesus tries to make here.
  - a. First, Jesus wants the people to know that the Father's greatest desire is to bring the lost to Him through Jesus.
    - (1). God draws us to Himself through the Word – the same Word that testifies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
  - b. Second, Jesus reaffirms His deity.
    - (1). He has seen the Father because He has been with the Father in heaven.

- (2). Therefore, Jesus is the only One who can guarantee eternal life to those who come to Him in faith and obedience.
- c. And third, Jesus once again affirms that He alone is the source of eternal life.
  - (1). Once again, Jesus claims to be the bread of life that has come down from heaven.
  - (2). Speaking in a metaphorical sense, He said that those who eat of this "living bread" will live forever.
  - (3). And, in a foreshadow of His death on the cross, Jesus adds, *"the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*
3. As we can imagine, this statement sparked a huge controversy among some of His critics.
  - a. **John 6:52** – *The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"*
  - b. But they had completely missed the point. Jesus wasn't talking about literally eating His flesh, but of coming to Him in faith, and trusting Him to provide everything they need to receive and sustain eternal life.

F. Once again, despite their rejection and their misunderstanding, Jesus patiently explains one more time.

1. **John 6:53-59** – *Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down from heaven — not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." 59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.*
2. Sometimes this passage is mistakenly applied to the Lord's Supper. But Jesus wasn't speaking of His flesh and His blood in that context.
  - a. Jesus is still speaking in a metaphorical sense describing Himself as the one and only source of spiritual nourishment, and the one and only source of eternal life.

- b. Jesus came to feed us spiritually – to fill the emptiness in our lives with hope and purpose; and in doing so, to provide us with eternal life through Him.
- c. We come to Jesus to be fed spiritually, not to be fed physically.

II. What was the reaction to all this?

- A. All too often, when people put their faith and trust in Jesus to bless them materially, and that blessing doesn't come, they turn away and walk with Him no more.
  - 1. False or misplaced expectations have turned many against the Lord.
  - 2. And in this story, the Lord's own disciples were the first to react. They felt Jesus had been a little hard on the people.
    - a. **John 6:60** – *Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"*
  - 3. But Jesus didn't apologize, because the words He spoke were intended to fill the spirit – not the stomach.
    - a. **John 6:61-65** – *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this*



*offend you? 62 What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe."*

*For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. 65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."*

- b. Sadly, even His own trusted disciples had problems with the things Jesus said.
- c. And to make matters even worse, Jesus knew there was one among His disciples who would eventually reject and betray Him.

B. But it was the reaction of the people that must have disappointed Jesus most.

- 1. **John 6:66-67** – *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. 67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"*
  - a. Sadly, many who had followed Jesus now turned away and *"walked with Him no more."*

- b. Why? Simply because He would no longer continue feeding them with bread and fish.
  - c. As long as their stomachs were filled, they would follow Him. But as soon as He stopped, they walked away.
2. Fortunately, the inner circle of Jesus' disciples (the twelve) understood Jesus offered what they needed most – all except one, that is.
- a. **John 6:68-71** – *But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 70 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" 71 He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. As we bring this lesson to a close, I want you to think about what your reaction would have been if you had been listening to Jesus on that day.
  - A. Would you continue to believe in Him, and follow Him even though you knew He would no longer take care of your physical needs?

1. Would you continue to follow Jesus if you knew He would no longer guarantee that you would be blessed physically and materially – and that you might even lose everything just to be His disciple?
  2. Would you continue to be a disciple of Jesus if all He offered you was the spiritual nourishment to fill the hunger in your soul, and to give you the promise of eternal life?
- B. Many come to Christ with false hopes and expectations – believing that life will suddenly become wonderful and filled with all sorts of blessings.
1. And yet, the truth is that many who come to Christ lose everything.
    - a. They lose family, friends, jobs, economic security, homes, and sometimes even their own lives.
    - b. But what they gain in return are the riches of every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus – including the blessing of eternal life and a home in heaven.
- C. The cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is high – we must be willing to give up everything and everyone who stands between us and faithfully serving the Lord.
1. Are you willing to make that kind of commitment?
    - a. If you are, then Jesus stands ready to receive you as His disciple. All you need to do is come to Him in faith, repenting

of your sins and be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins.

2. And if you've made that commitment in the past but, like many of these disciples, have walked away. What then?
  - a. You can still come back. All you need to do is turn around and come back to Jesus, repenting of your sins, and confessing those sins to your Father in heaven.
3. And for those of you who might be struggling with your faith in Jesus because you're facing difficult and trying times?
  - a. Understand that the Lord does not promise that life will be free from trials and tribulations.
  - b. But He does promise to never leave us nor forsake us.
  - c. And more than that, He promises to give us a home in heaven someday where the cares and worries of this world will never be able to touch us again.
4. So, if you fit into one of these three categories, then come to Christ in faith and obedience now and He will sustain you.