

I am the Bread of Life [Slide 1] John 6:26-51

Our sermon series for December is entitled, “Jesus selfies.” A selfie is a picture that a person takes of themselves. Jesus did not have a camera back in his day, but he did choose mental pictures to describe himself. These mental pictures or selfies are how Jesus chose to illustrate himself to the world. We are going to look at four of them in December, all from the Gospel of John.

The first self-portrait is in John 6:26-51. John is the fourth book in the New Testament. I invite you to turn there. John 6:26-51. This passage occurs after Jesus had miraculously fed five thousand men plus women and children by multiplying some fishes and loaves of bread he got from a young boy. So when he talks about the Bread of Life to his audience, they are all people that he miraculously fed bread to the day before.

I see three themes that run through this passage. The first one is the most pronounced, Jesus is the food that produces eternal life. The second theme is the place of works and faith in salvation. The third theme is the will of the Father in salvation. We will look at all three themes to see how Jesus is the bread of God that gives life to the world.

[Slide 2] Let’s begin with the theme that Jesus is the food that produces eternal life. Look at verses 26-27. Read.

Like a doctor, Jesus diagnoses the crowd’s level of spiritual interest. They are not coming to Jesus because they saw miracles and recognized that in Jesus something spiritually significant was happening. They are coming to Jesus because they ate the bread and satisfied their hunger and now they want Jesus to provide more free food. The reality is that physical bread does not keep you satisfied. Its effect wears off and then you need more bread.

Jesus tells them to stop working for or to stop trying to obtain food which perishes but rather seek to obtain the food which endures to eternal life. Jesus is speaking in figurative terms. He’s not literally saying you should no longer concern yourself with eating food. He’s saying the chief aim in your life should not be food and filling your stomach. It should be eternal life and filling your soul. When he talks about food which endures to eternal life he is saying there is something that you can take in that will give you eternal life. This food the Son of Man can give you because he has been authorized to do so. The Father has set his seal on Jesus. If someone carried the seal of the Emperor it meant they had the authority of the Emperor to make decisions. God the Father has authorized God the Son to dispense eternal life to people.

I’m going to skip to verses 32-36 where Jesus again takes up the theme of the food that produces eternal life. Let’s read those verses. Read.

In verse 32 Jesus refers to the story of Moses and the manna in the wilderness. Each day God had manna drop down from the sky and accumulate on the ground so that the Israelites could walk around and gather it and eat it. Moses told the Israelites about the coming manna but Moses did not provide the manna. God the Father provided the manna. Then Jesus switches to present tense. He says, “My father gives to you the true bread of heaven. This true bread of God comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.” The Greek word here for life is *Zoe* which is used to refer to eternal life versus *bios* which refers to normal physical life. The bread of life potentially offers eternal life to the whole world. I say potentially because you have to eat it in order to receive eternal life.

Jesus’ audience wants that bread so they said, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

Now Jesus clarifies. He is the bread of life. Whoever comes to Jesus shall not hunger and he who believes in Jesus shall never thirst. Jesus is not referring to hungering for food or thirsting for drink. He is referring to the deeper cravings of the soul, to the desires for significance, for purpose, for meaning, for relationship, for love, all those things which find their greatest fulfillment in eternal life.

You see, eternal life does not refer only to life that goes on forever. Eternal life refers to the quality of life. It refers to the life of God, to all the goodness that comes from sharing with God. The great Scientist and theologian Blaise Pascal talked about how each person has this God-shaped vacuum inside their life that only God can fill. That vacuum is the craving for the eternal life of God. He who comes to Jesus in faith receives that eternal life.

Jesus further elaborates on the Bread of Life in verses 47-51. Let's read those verses. Read. Jesus reiterates that he is the Bread of Life and that whoever believes in him has eternal life. In verse 51, Jesus says that the bread which he shall give for the life of the world is his flesh. What does he mean by that?

It is a reference to his sacrificial death. He gives up his flesh; he gives up his life for the world. Think about when you eat something you are crushing it with your teeth. When you eat bread you crush it. Now listen to Isaiah 53:5 which describes Jesus' death on the cross. Read. Jesus was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

When you eat something, that food is digested in your stomach and intestines and then that crushed food is sent by the blood to the cells throughout your whole body to feed them and keep them alive. Your food spreads throughout you and affects every part of you. When you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit who is also called the Spirit of Christ, enters you and affects every part of you: your emotions, your will, your thinking, your desires, everything. Because the Holy Spirit is eternal, he brings eternal life with him and brings it to you. So, the process of eating and digestion is an analogy of what happens to you spiritually when you believe in Jesus.

Jesus is the one whom when you take him into your life, like eating bread, then he gives you eternal life through his Spirit who indwells you.

[Slide 3] The second theme in this passage is that Jesus does the working, we do the trusting in salvation. The way we partake of the bread of life is by means of faith. Let's read verses 28-31. Read.

In verse 27 Jesus told the people not to work for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to eternal life. His audience took him too literally. They understood him to be saying that you have to work to obtain salvation and eternal life. This is a common misunderstanding of people today. Maybe even you think that. The reality is we do not work for our salvation. Jesus does the work, we do the trusting in salvation.

Jesus said the work of God, the way to obtain salvation is to believe in him whom God sent, or to believe in Jesus. Trusting is something you do but it is not technically a work. You don't spend money to obtain salvation. You don't do so many good deeds to obtain salvation. You don't attend so many worship services or Bible studies to obtain salvation. You don't expend effort or energy to obtain salvation. You simply trust in Jesus to save you. You don't earn salvation. You receive it as a gift.

In verse 30 they ask Jesus what work does he do for a sign that they might believe. If they are going to believe they want to see him perform another miracle. My guess is that they want him to multiply more bread and fish for lunch, because in verse 31 they refer back to the manna that miraculously came down from Heaven. In fact, many Jews believed that the greatest of Moses' miracles was the giving of the manna. The request for a sign seems insincere and hypocritical to

me. Jesus had already performed a miracle for them in multiplying the bread and the fish. Why did they need another miracle?

The work Jesus performed for our salvation was enduring death on a cross. The sign he provided that we might believe is his resurrection from the dead. His death paid for your sins. You do not have to do any work to pay off your sins. They are already paid. You simply have to trust Jesus as your Savior and your God. Surrender to Jesus from your rebellion against God. Trust in him and what he has done for you through his death and resurrection. Jesus does the work in salvation, you do the trusting.

[Slide 4] The final theme I mention in this passage is the Father's will worked out in our salvation. We'll look at verses 37-46, beginning with verse 37. Read verse 37..

Jesus indicates that those who are saved have been given to Jesus by the Father. This verse implies what Paul teaches in the book of Romans that God chooses people to be saved. He elects them according to his foreknowledge. All that the Father chooses will come to Jesus and when they come, Jesus will not cast them out. This verse teaches the perseverance of the saints and their eternal security. If you come in faith to Jesus, he will not cast you out. It does not matter what you have done or will do. Jesus' death on the cross covers every sin.

Verse 38 Read. In verse 38 Jesus says that everything he did on the Earth was according to the will of the Father. Then he further explains the will of the Father in verses 39-40. Read.

Jesus will not lose anyone who is saved. He will resurrect everyone who has truly believed in him. It only makes sense. How could you lose eternal life? It wouldn't be eternal if you could lose it. It would only be temporary life. God gives us eternal life, not temporary life. Our salvation is not even dependent on how firm a faith we have in Jesus, but on how firm a grasp he has on us.

Verses 41-42. Read. In the Gospel of John, when you see the word, Jews, understand that is really referring to the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders grumbled about Jesus because they knew his family. How could Jesus be the bread out of heaven when he was born to Mary and Joseph? They didn't understand what Jesus was saying, because they did not know who Jesus was.

Jesus responds to their grumbling in verses 43-46. Read. People don't get saved unless God the Father draws them to faith. However, whoever the Father draws, Jesus will raise up on the last day. I love the testimony of CS Lewis who affirmed that he was saved only by the Father drawing him. Read CS Lewis quote on card. The Father teaches people to come to Jesus. This teaching is not face to face because no one has actually seen the Father in his full glory except the one who is from the Father, namely Jesus.

It is by the Father's will that men are saved. It is by the Father's will that Jesus is the Bread of Life. It is by the Father's will that Jesus died for our salvation. It is by the Father's will that whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish but have eternal life.

What do you do with this information? Jesus said in verse 35 that if you come to him you shall not hunger and if you believe in him you shall never thirst. He claimed that you will only find a full satisfaction of your desires in him. Everyone else and everything else will leave you thirsty and hungry for more.

Perhaps you have always sensed there must be something more, you just didn't know what it was. It is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. God has designed you to need him and you won't be satisfied until you have him in your life. Jesus is your Bread of Life. You need him.

I am going to close with a prayer of faith in Jesus Christ. If you have never trusted Jesus to save you from God's judgment, I invite you to pray along with me and then later to tell someone of the decision you made.

Father, I admit that I have sinned against you and deserve your judgment. I'm ready to stop disobeying you and ready to submit to you. I trust in Jesus' death on the cross to pay for my sins. I believe he is God the Son and God my Savior. I believe that he is risen from the dead and is my risen Lord. I call upon Jesus to forgive my sins and give me eternal life. Amen.