

## “I Am the Bread of Life”

Today's Text: John 6

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections which, when considered together paint us a twofold picture of the human condition and God's response to it. We see the human tendency to put spiritual concepts into physical categories, and we see God's response to human need as spiritual reality. We also can see the result of the clash between the two: most people will fall away from God.

### Part One: John 6:1-15

This is the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. This great miracle of Jesus really gets the attention of the people because not only was it amazing to behold, but it also included a free meal. To some in the crowd, Jesus leapt out as a man they should listen to, for He had performed a miracle; He must be in good with God! To others, Jesus brought them hope that they could support their families for free; surely God was at work!

### Part 2: John 6:16-24

This section includes another sign that the crowd did not get to see: Jesus walking on the water. He had left the place where He had fed the crowd and the disciples had followed Him by boat. A storm blew up on the Sea and suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water toward them. When He got into the boat, they reached shore. Not bad for a night's work; two miracles in one! The next day, the crowd realized that Jesus was gone, and they went out to look for Him. Eventually, they got into boats and sailed for Capernaum where He had gone, and we move into the central part of the chapter...

### Part 3: John 6:25-59

In the third section, Jesus disappoints the crowd by telling them that He isn't giving them another free lunch, but that the true bread of life in Jesus Himself. Before getting into the particulars, we must understand that to these people, "bread" symbolizes life. If a person has bread, he will not starve this day. If he has the supplies and the ability to make bread tomorrow he will not starve then either: where there is bread there is continuation of life. Bread remains the staple aspect of Western cuisine to this day, much in the same way that rice is in the far east.

25-27: Jesus confronts the notion of free meals right away, pointing the people instead toward the spiritual truth behind the feeding of the five thousand. The people could only see the physical, practical aspect of receiving food from Jesus. Jesus on the other hand was more concerned with the truth behind the miracle: life depends on a life-source that transcends mere biology for the true nature of life is spiritual not physical.

28-29: OK, they seem to say, what must we do? They are looking for a new rule or an activity by which they could obtain a loaf of bread that will be able to automatically replenish itself: they were making a serious category error.

29-31: The answer Jesus gave was classic: The work for you to do is to believe in Jesus! Great, say the people: give us a sign! It's hard not to laugh at this... Wasn't feeding the five thousand enough of a sign? What will Jesus need to do to convince the people, rise from the dead or something? I'd bet people wouldn't even believe Him if He did that! I know, why don't you start the manna flowing again...

32-33: Here Jesus tells them that if they want manna from God, it isn't the kind that Moses had, but rather it will be true bread (as opposed to literal bread) This true bread is Jesus Himself. Jesus gives life; it doesn't come from the grocery store, for life is a much more profound force than the continuation of a biological process in the body.

35-42: Ok fine, give us some of this bread... Jesus tells them that He is the bread of life; all life forces come from Him. If you take within the bread that is Jesus, you will have eternal life, not just your little lifetime here on earth. This starts not with just eating some whole wheat or rye, but rather when you decide to believe. If you don't decide to believe then you can go no further down the road of eternal life, but when you make this huge choice, eternal life is within your grasp, through Christ Himself. Quite naturally, the people didn't want that, for they were only looking for physical things, and they grumbled and complained as people like to do.

43-52: Jesus tells them to stop grumbling amongst themselves, always a command we need to keep in mind, for while we grumble we neglect what He is teaching. He goes on to give a memorable passage in which He tells them that those who believe in Him will have eternal life, and that we must eat of Him to have life. We must eat of His flesh which He will give for the life of the world. Physical bread will not give eternal life. The people, who are always stuck on the mere physicality of life are horrified! Yuk!

83-59: Since the people are determined to be tuck on the physical, Jesus gives them physical. He talks about eating His flesh and drinking His blood as though He were going to offer Himself to a bunch of cannibals. Of course the traditional Sunday school lesson will teach here that Jesus was only speaking of Communion: Laughable! Again, we only see physical things. Jesus was talking about what Communion represents; the reality of Communion. Communion has little to do with its physical aspects; it is all about redemption and what sustains a new life. When we eat of the bread and drink from the cup are we nourishing our bodies? Hardly...

We do this in remembrance of what He did for us; this is important. We go through an act that symbolizes taking Jesus into ourselves to sustain our lives *spiritually*. When you eat a meal, that food enters you body, and in due course provides energy and nourishment to your body; the elements that make up the food become one with your body on a molecular level. Thus in a sense the food becomes a part of you. When we take the Spirit within us (the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) the Spirit becomes a part of who and what we are spiritually, and grows within us when we allow it. This gives us eternal life. This gives us fellowship with God, which the God's purpose for creating Man in the first place; and this completes the cycle of redeeming and reclaiming Mankind for God.

	<b>Experience of Israel in Exodus</b>	<b>Expectations of the Crowd in John 6</b>	<b>Jesus as the Bread of Life</b>
<i>Frequency</i>	Eat manna daily	Eat bread daily	Eat Bread once
<i>Giver</i>	Moses	Prophet like Moses	God through Christ
<i>Recipients</i>	Jews	Jews	All mankind
<i>Spiritual Lesson</i>	Ate & learned nothing	Eat and learn nothing	Learn Christ
<i>Result</i>	Died	Die	Eternal Life

**Part 4:** John 6:60-71

Upon hearing all of this, the people following Jesus largely abandoned Him. Of course we now know that this is typical of people who cannot allow themselves to discern spiritual truth. People will often follow Jesus for a time, but when they realize that this involves more than a "get out of jail free" card, and that it will result in growing far beyond the merely physical they bail. Jesus spoke one more great line here, one that we should commit to memory: "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." This is truly something we must always keep in mind, for they are the key to unlocking the things of God.

**Conclusion**

It is important to note that Jesus in this discourse used *typology* in His treatment of manna and bread. The manna is the *type*, Jesus is the *antitype* or the reality that the type represents. God gave provision to the Israelites in the Wilderness with the manna; it sustained them. However this was not God's ultimate purpose. His ultimate purpose was to redeem Mankind to Himself through Christ, thus the manna as sustenance was the type of Jesus the Redeemer and sustenance unto eternal life. A related type would be the Communion elements: they are not what redeemed us, they are the representation of the body and blood of Christ: Christ is the redeemer. Of course, the Old Testament in particular is full of typology. Moses as the leader and redeemer of the people was a type of Christ, the Promised Land is a type of Heaven, and so on...

## The Light of the World

Today's Text: John 8:12-47

### Introduction

This discourse took place on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, in the evening when the last great ceremony was held. In that time, there would have been four great torches lit. They said that in those days, the light from those torches could be seen all over the city. Jesus' statement about being the light of the world would have had the added significance of being contrasted with the light of the ceremony in progress at the time. The ceremony was a hint of things to come; Jesus was telling them that this was the day it came.

### Points of Interest

**12:** To the reader of John, Jesus' use of the light should come as no surprise. "Light" was a description for Jesus in chapter one (Vv. 4,5,7,8,9) and in chapter three, Jesus has already used light as a metaphor to illustrate the opposite of sin and evil (3:19-21) Here, He does this again, telling the people that anyone who follows Him will never dwell in darkness (sin). The light of life adds to the "living" series He has established: living water, living bread, and now living light. He is telling them that He is the eternal source of Truth.

**13-20:** The Pharisees of course will object to all of this; they just can't help themselves. They take an interesting legalistic tact in saying that Jesus can't tell them about Himself because He lacks third party validation (witnesses). Jesus calmly explains to them that He has a perfectly adequate witness, One whom they should listen to: God Himself.

**21-30:** Jesus is raising the bar in this section. No longer are they just talking about whether or not He can talk about who He is, Jesus is in essence pulling rank: He is from above, the Pharisees are from below. That is to say that Jesus is from God, they are from this world, and if they cannot recognize Him for who He is, they will perish in their sins. Verse 28 is especially interesting. When you have "lifted up" the Son of Man... uses a Messianic title (Son of Man) along with a reference to the brass serpent in the Wilderness and we can see that it is a reference to His crucifixion. Then He continues with a phrase that is most revealing in the Greek: "...then you will know that I am the one I claim to be..." in NIV is literally "...that I am..." in the Greek. Of course, after He is lifted up will come the resurrection from the grave which will confirm His "I Am-ness" for all time.

**31-47:** Jesus turns His remarks to the believers in their midst in verses 31 and 32, telling them that if they hold to His teachings (literally "continue in my word") they will know the truth, and the truth will set them free. Of course they will know the Truth because Jesus is the Truth; they will also know His teaching (Word) which is truth. The Pharisees then launch into a discussion of Abraham's seed and being the sons of Abraham (by the Abrahamic Covenant). They are questioning who is Jesus' Father, seeing only their Covenant through Abraham. Jesus, raising the bar again is referring to God Himself as His Father. The discussion gets a bit nasty when Jesus tells them that if they refuse to believe in Him, their Father is none other than the devil, that they are liars and speaking just like their true Father the devil. So much for the notion that Abraham's Covenant is fulfilled apart from Christ Himself! Vv. 42-47 are where Jesus makes the case that they are following in the devil's footsteps by rejecting Him, for in doing so they are committing Satan's sin of rejecting God.

# The Good Shepherd

Today's Text: John 10:1-18

## Introduction

This passage is figurative. (John 10:6) There are 8 components of the extended metaphor in this section: The *shepherd* is the caretaker and owner of the sheep. The *sheep (flock)* are the animals that the shepherd loves and cares for. The *thief* is the one who tries to steal the sheep away from their rightful owner, the *watchman* is the one who opens the *gate* only for the shepherd, the *hired hand* watches the sheep, but lacks the dedication of the shepherd. The *wolf* is a predator that terrorizes kills and scatters the flock, and the *sheep pen* is the protective enclosure in which the flock is kept for safety during the night.

## The Set Up

**1-5:** He begins with the thief; the thief enters the pen by any manner other than through the gate. He sneaks in by some form of subterfuge for the express purpose of stealing the sheep away from the flock. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd, who is recognized by the watchman as the legitimate shepherd. In addition, he is also recognized by the sheep who love and trust him. He calls them by name (has a deep relationship with them) and they will follow him where ever he goes. They will not follow anyone who is not the shepherd, because they are strangers to the sheep; they only follow the shepherd.

## The Gate

**7-10:** Jesus begins to make His point here. Jesus Himself is the gate; no one enters the flock except through Him. If they enter the pen through Jesus, they will be saved and have life to the full. The thief on the other hand, enters the pen by a means other than Jesus; his motive is to steal, kill and destroy. The sheep do not follow such a person.

## The Good Shepherd

**11-13:** Jesus is not only the gate, but He is the Good Shepherd. He is the "good" shepherd because when all others run away, He will lay down His life for the salvation of the sheep. His caring is so great for His sheep that He will die for them.

## Conclusion

**14-18:** In this final section, Jesus sets out the theology of His coming sacrifice on the cross. He will willingly lay down His life for His flock. No one will take it from Him, for His act is voluntary. It is authorized and ordained by His Father in Heaven, for it will result in the redemption of all mankind. This act will not only seal the salvation of His sheep, but redeem mankind back to fellowship with God, something that has been absent from creation ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. This will also highlight the separation of those within the flock, and those without the flock; nothing will ever be the same again.

## I Am the Way

Today's Text: John 14:5-14

### Introduction

In essence, this is Jesus' "final briefing" to His disciples. Judas is gone, they were shaken by his betrayal and Jesus opened this chapter with words of comfort, followed by Him telling them that He was about to die. They didn't understand the last part of His "going away" and thus we open with Thomas asking about this point.

### Points of Interest

**5-7:** Here is Thomas' fateful question, and Jesus' classic reply: "I am the way..." Jesus follows this by adding that if you knew me you would know the Father, and then says something we often overlook: "From now on, you do know him and have seen him." He tells them this because of the fact that Father and Son are One. Note also that Jesus tells them again that He Himself is the way to the Father. Like last week, this puts everyone on notice that there is no alternate way to salvation: It is Jesus and Jesus only.

**8-11:** Phillip is the one who goes down in history for this classic in which he says that Jesus should go ahead and show them the Father, and that will be good enough! Jesus, ever patient tells them that if they have seen Jesus, they have also seen the Father. The message is that they are the same. If nothing else, they should believe this because He has performed in front of them the miracles to prove it.

**12-14:** Here we have the transition: "I tell you the truth" that takes us into a different discussion. Jesus leaves the matter of who He really is and the evidence to support it and goes into the new age that is about to dawn. He tells them that in this new age, He will do anything they ask in His name so that the Father will be glorified. Note that this is to glorify the Father and not to glorify the disciples.

### Final Thoughts

We really can't leave this section without noting the discussion that follows. Jesus goes on to tell them about the coming of the Holy Spirit, and about how they will be blessed if they obey His commands. Notice that asking for things in His name, the Holy Spirit and obedience are all linked together. Jesus was not telling them that if they say the magic words, "In Jesus' name" will get them everything they want in life. Instead He is telling them that if they walk with Him, obey His commands and work to glorify God, then He will bless them and aid them in doing His work. One could make a case for an implied covenant here.

Along those lines, consider the things that He has commanded for us to do. In chapter 13 it was to love one another. In chapter 14 He instructed them to obey His commands, and in chapter 15 He commanded them to bear much fruit. In Matthew 28 He gave the Great Commission to the church. What are you doing this week to obey Him?

## The True Vine

Today's Text: John 15:1-17

### Introduction

In this section Jesus uses the analogy of a vine. In those times, wine making was a hugely important undertaking; one that most people would know something about. It involves a great deal of pruning in order to produce a crop of grapes, rather than a crop of branches, as the vine tends to grab territory. By pruning the branches, the vine will produce much more fruit. This analogy contains the following elements:

<b>Element</b>	<b>Vineyard Function</b>	<b>Represents</b>	<b>Function to the Christian</b>
Vine	Give life to the branches	Jesus	Brings and sustains life to disciples
Branches	Bearing fruit	Jesus' disciples	Carry on the ministry of Jesus by bearing His love
Gardener	Prunes the branches to encourage fruit growth	God the Father	Judges and cleanses the community of believers

### Points of Interest

**1-4:** Jesus sets forth His analogy in this section. He indicates that the Father will do the pruning so that branches that bear no fruit will be eliminated and those that do bear fruit will bear even more. All of this is contingent on the branches remaining in the vine; Jesus. Being Jesus' disciple requires that we remain in Him and that we grow in Him, otherwise we will be cut off.

**5-8:** This paragraph speaks to the necessity of spiritual growth for the Christian. We cannot bear fruit for Christ if we are apart from Him. Anyone who has had the experience of neglecting their relationship with Christ can tell you that nothing seemed to go right for them during this process. Trying to live apart from Christ, or at least neglecting the need to grow *in Him* results in all kinds of problems; marriage problems, personal problems, family problems and so on... It is as though we are branches that are cut off from the main vine; we just wither. However if we remain in Him, He will sustain us and answer our prayers giving us even more growth.

**9-14:** Jesus now tells us how to remain in Him: obey His commands! Think about it, how can you claim to love Jesus and follow Him if you neglect or disregard His commands? His greatest commend is that we love one another as He loved us. Remember that His love was not about His feelings, but was expressed in service and sacrifice. Do we serve and sacrifice for one another? The result of this will be joy, not heavy obligation.

**15-17:** In this fascinating passage, Jesus tells us that as His disciples, we move on from just being His servant to becoming His friend. This is because a servant just served, but when we grow into discipleship we have learned all that He has to teach us; we now would know the Master's business. Thus, we have graduated from the status of a mere servant to a "friend". Of course the question is: Have we done enough growing yet? For most of us the answer would be that we still have a long way to go: Remain in Him and love one another!

## “I Am He”

Today's Text: John 18:1-11

### Introduction

This text is not actually one of the seven “I Am” statements of John’s Gospel, but it does make an interesting study none the less. It takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper at the time when Jesus was arrested. In short, Jesus and the remaining disciples had gone to the Garden to pray when Judas came to them with a detachment of troops to arrest Jesus. It is Jesus’ response to their arrival that contains the statement we will look at today.

### Points of Interest

**1:** Here we set the scene: they left the upper room and crossed the Kidron Valley, which is more of a ravine than a valley, with a creek that runs through it separating the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. It is an area where there are many olive trees, and it is one of these groves that they entered, one known to us as the “Garden of Gethsemane.”

**2-3:** Judas leads a group into the garden to arrest Jesus; but what kind of group was this? There was a detachment of troops and officials from the Temple. First, the troops: The NIV says a ‘detachment’ of troops, taken from the Greek word *speira* which is the word for ‘cohort’. A cohort of troops means 1/10 of a Roman Legion, or a detachment of 600 Romans soldiers! While this seems amazing, the Romans were not people who liked to fight fair battles, and could be consistent with that policy. An even more interesting question arises if this is true: How involved were the Romans in the plot to kill Jesus? The group of “officials” is most likely Temple police, armed as well. One thing seems to emerge early on in this story; the arresting officials seem more worried about their safety than Jesus is about His.

**4-6:** Jesus makes no attempt to hide from this force, but rather speaks first, asking who they are after... as if He didn’t already know that. Notice here who is in command of the situation: Jesus, not the military. Note also that John makes no reference to Judas kissing Jesus or any of that sort of thing, although His proximity to Jesus is noted. Rather John portrays the command of Jesus, which is entirely consistent with John’s overall demonstration of the spiritual authority of Jesus throughout his Gospel. When the men respond that they are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus replies: “I am he”. (Literally in the Greek, “I am”). In so doing, we have the Son of God stating His real name: I AM.

The result of this statement is dramatic: hundreds of armed men, including some of the best military in the world fall to the ground. This is what happens when the force of men (and demons) comes into direct attack against the authority of God.

**7-9:** In spite of what has just happened, Jesus is determined to be arrested. His concern is not for His own escape, but for the safety of His disciples, which makes perfect sense considering the role that God had planned for them in the coming weeks and years.

**10-11:** Gotta love Peter! In his brashness, he nearly fouls Jesus’ arrest, but Jesus still in command of the situation, stills His follower and is taken into custody so that He might do his Father’s will.