

John 6:30-51

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[0:00] Amen. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in John chapter 6. Amen.

There are seven places in John's Gospel that Jesus introduces himself as I am. Harkening back to that first introduction of God by name, the self-sufficient one.

Then, followed by a metaphor. So, I am followed by a metaphor. Here he will say, I am the bread of life.

Verse 35 and in verse 48. He'll go on in John's Gospel to call himself, I am the good shepherd, the vine, the way, the truth, the life, and the resurrection and the life.

This is the first of those seven. This text also follows a literary theme in John's Gospel where a miracle is performed, in this case, two miracles, and then a discourse is recorded.

[1:36] We call this the bread of life discourse, this portion of it, at least this morning. We don't want to disconnect the words of Jesus from the activity of Jesus.

In this case, it brings much to life in it. So, let's take our minds back to the beginning of the chapter for just a moment before we read the text together.

At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee and a great crowd follows him. They're seeing him perform miracles. They think, this guy's amazing.

They follow him to a remote place where Jesus miraculously feeds them from five barley loaves and two fish. See, there's 5,000 men, which means there's a multitude more than that, women and children.

And there's two specific things I want us to remember from this text. First, it's literary structure, which is chiastic.

[2:40] It places verse 10 at the center of the episode. In case you have no idea what I'm talking about, I'll get to it. I'll explain what a chiasm is. But recall, back when we looked at this text together, verse 10, John 10, verse 10, there Jesus says, have the people sit down.

And then John records, now there was much grass in the place. So, the men sat down, about 5,000 in number.

And I drew your attention to this, this interesting little detail that John puts in there. It's not odd and out of place, but what's he trying to accomplish? What's he trying to picture for us as the entirety of John's gospel is chiastic?

Chapter 6 corresponds with chapter 10, where Jesus calls himself the good shepherd. He's picturing for us Jesus as this one.

Psalm 23 is where your mind ought to go. So, the psalmist says, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

[3:53] He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. So, there's this picture of this good shepherd, right, providing plentifully for his people, giving him place of rest.

But the psalmist very quickly makes this about the soul, this restoration of soul. So, it's being set up for us already.

Everything that Jesus is going to say about himself as the bread of life. So, that's the first thing that's good to remember in this chapter. Secondly, verse 13 records, So, they gathered them up, the leftovers, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.

So, there are twelve baskets because there are twelve apostles. Each one of them has a basket. And this may seem like a random bit of information, but I suggest to you, as I did in our previous study of this part of chapter six, that it is a bit of information that adds punctuation to the bread of life discourse as we study into the next miracle.

Following the feeding of this great crowd, the disciples get into a boat and begin a journey back across the sea.

[5 : 21] But Jesus has yet to join them. He doesn't get in the boat with them. And while they're out on the sea, they encounter rough weather. And Jesus comes to them walking on the water.

Now, do I believe this happened chronologically? Absolutely, I do. But here we see, in chapter six, a miracle of Jesus feeding five thousand, the emphasis being on the bread.

Notice that the fish aren't even acknowledged in the taking up of leftovers. And then, he launches into the bread of life discourse.

But in between the two, John records this particular miracle. Why? Why does he do that? Is he a stickler for chronology? I'd suggest not.

In fact, all throughout John's gospel, he jumps over some rather notable stories in Jesus's life. So, why? Why does he show us this one?

[6 : 21] John chapter six, verse 20 and 21. Again, I hear verse 20 is the center of the chiastic structure. It's meant to draw our attention.

They're afraid when they see him walking on the water, understandably. But he said to them, verse 20, It is I. And it would be a very fair translation.

In fact, I wish it was translated this way. I am. Do not be afraid. It's the center of this story.

I am. Do not be afraid. And look at their response. Then, they were glad to take him into the boat.

And immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. Right? Carried safely through the storm. And I suggested to you, when we looked at the beginning of chapter six, that what's happening here is that each one of them had just carried around this basket and taken into it bread.

[7 : 28] Jesus is drawing out this connection that he is the bread of life. And they take him in the same way into the boat. I think that's why John places this right here, which I find very incredible.

If you don't, I can't help you. So those two things, I think, are really helpful for us to remember. Following their crossing, right?

The crowd is still seeking him, but they are not seeking him for him. They are coming because, verse 26 tells us, they ate their fill.

They want to get what Jesus can give them, but they don't want Jesus himself. And it's there that this discourse launches off.

Verse 27, John records Jesus saying, Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

[8 : 30] For on him God the Father has set his seal. Then they said to him, What must we do to be doing the works of God?

Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. Which brings us to today's text.

Let's pray just before I read it. Father, help us this morning, we pray, as we take up your word together, that you'd find us grateful for it, humbly coming to it, to see what it is that we ought to know from it, and more importantly, that we would know you from it.

We want to rightly understand it, and rightly apply it. We humbly recognize it was written for your glory, and our good. We pray that you'd work it in our hearts.

Use my feeble preparation this week, and my feeble ability now, to work the great good in us, that we would believe its promises, and obey its commands, and have affection for you, its author.

[9 : 43] We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. John chapter 6, beginning in verse 30. So they said to him, Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you?

What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world. They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

[10 : 59] For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven.

They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, Do not grumble among yourselves.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God.

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except he who is from God, he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

[12 : 05] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Now, there is much to be unpacked here. I was tempted this morning to turn this into a part one and a part two, but we're going to try to press on through.

I just won't hit every single thing that could be said here or plumb the depths of this text. It is worth revisiting. In fact, these verses are the chiastic center of chapter 6.

It's good. It's really good to understand it rightly. But I think for us to try to unpack it helpfully, we can note two prominent points that are found throughout the text itself.

Now, as a little aside, I don't think we've publicly acknowledged just a sadness over the passing recently of John MacArthur.

[13 : 06] I say recently. I think it was in the middle of July at the age of 86. We've really lost some notable contemporary men these past couple of years.

This one, I think especially sad. I'm very grateful for the 86 years he had. I'm so glad that he finished well. He's been helpful to many of us.

I'm going to rip off his outline for this text this morning. I think it's John MacArthur that taught me to alliterate, and boy, he's got some alliteration for this one.

You get bonus friend points with me if you can tell me after this. If you can tell me who wrote the line, I got a backpack full of tracks, plus I keep a Johnny Mac so I can pound it out.

Think of that later. Two-point outline. Number one, divine provision. And number two, here's the P, human appropriation.

[14:11] Divine provision. Number two, human appropriation. And we'll find some sub-points here as well. So firstly, divine provision.

We see this throughout the text. I mean, note it particularly in the first five verses. Right? So they're looking for a sign. Right? Oh, we're supposed to do this work of believing.

Well, then prove to us. Right? Which Jesus had already done. They say, our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. That was a miracle. Right?

Word is written. He gave them bread from heaven to eat. And Jesus says to them, that bread came from heaven, and I, the true bread, are given by the Father.

Into verse 32. My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

[15:14] Now, understand when Jesus is talking about bread here, he's talking about a staple food product. Right? Like, we live in a day where we're trying to avoid bread all of the time.

But here, this would have been the normative way that grain was turned into something edible. So he's talking about sustenance. He's talking about life itself.

Their heads are in the temporal, temporal life. He is clearly talking about eternal life. Your truest and greatest need is a spiritual need, not a temporal need.

We too often, like them, have our gaze fixed on the temporal stuff. and not lift our eyes to the eternal. I am quick to forget how satisfied my soul should be in the salvation of my God when I look at the trouble that I experience day to day, the pressures that are all around me.

And I think this is where they find themselves. They say, Sir, give us this bread always. Misunderstanding. Missing the point.

[16:35] And Jesus says in verse 35, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

I think he's hearkening back to previous teaching there in the text. Fully satisfy the spiritual needs of our life. And this is given from heaven.

It comes from the Father. There's a divine provision for our greatest of need. Note some things about this provision.

Jesus, the bread of life. Notice first, his divine preexistence. Divine preexistence. Just briefly here.

Verse 33 says, For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Right? This is the very thing that's troubling the Jews.

[17:34] He's saying he is God. And yes, this is absolutely true. If this wasn't true of Jesus, he would be the most terrible of blasphemers.

Right? Total liar. Deceptive. Perhaps a lunatic. But in this case, he's actually Lord. This idea is repeated both in verse 50 and in 51.

John begins this gospel account with this very idea. He's trying to convince us Jesus is the Christ and he starts in John chapter 1. In the beginning was the Word.

Jesus. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And in case you doubt his deity, he says in verse 3, all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.

Right? Jesus' very person here is being put on display as he calls himself the bread of life that has come down from heaven.

[18 : 45] Notice, secondly, in this divine provision that there is a divine purpose. Jesus was sent. He was sent for something in particular.

And that was to redeem his people. Notice verse 37. There Jesus says, All that the Father gives me will come to me.

The Father has something he will give to Jesus. Jesus. Who is he talking about here? He's talking about his people. Everyone who will repent and believe in I will never cast out.

I have not come down from heaven to do my own will but the will of him who sent me to fulfill a divine purpose.

The salvation of God's people. And this is the will, verse 39, of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day.

[19 : 54] See God's people all the way to glory for this is the will of my Father that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

Now, we as a church hold to the doctrine of sovereign grace. Right? Divine election.

But I know not everybody in the room holds to this doctrine. And I just want you to know that I am sympathetic towards you. There's a lot to think about and a lot to wrestle out as we think about these things.

But I just want to be, for my own self and for you, I just want to be really honest with the text. What does it say? What does it set down in front of us?

Another text says a similar thing. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3 through 5. There Paul writes, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ.

[21 : 02] What a couple of words that is. In Christ, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as, just like, he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will.

It's there and it's plain. And I just don't want to do logical or grammatical somersaults to try to make it mean something other than what it means.

It's just laid out there. clear for us. I think of a lot of our problem is that we have been brought to this kind of teaching in really wrong ways.

But this kind of doctrine should only work in us three things. Only three things should be happening when we take up this kind of doctrine. First, it should make us massively humble.

[22 : 18] humble. It should humble us at every level. Too many people, when they come to understand these doctrines, become prideful rather than humble.

They've unlocked the mystery and the key, and I think I myself have been guilty of this in past years. Perhaps maybe there's a frustration there against growing up in a way that seemed to make God really small and not the massive sovereign God that he is.

I don't know all of the mix there, but it ought not ever make us proud. It ought to only make us humble. Why me, oh Lord?

If God were to be entirely fair, not a single person would be saved. He would withdraw the wrath from Christ, because Christ certainly did not deserve it.

And none of us would find the blessed state that we have in Christ Jesus. It ought to make us absolutely humble. It ought to also give us great confidence.

[23 : 35] If we find that we are in Christ, there's an evidencing of his spirit at work in our lives, bringing forth the fruit of repentance, then it ought to ground our faith.

Verse 39, this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me. Christ is either powerful to accomplish this work, or he is not.

And I want to make much of him. Jesus can do exactly what he set out to do, and what he set out to do was exactly what the father wanted him to do, and that gives me great confidence on my most wretched of days to say, yes, because of Christ, in Christ, not because of my merit, but because of his, I have the salvation of my soul.

So that's the second thing. The third thing that it ought to do is it ought to press us out to share the good news of Jesus. And if this to your mind is counter logical, it gives us confidence in our going because God has a people, and God is saving a people, and we want to go and declare the good news which he has said needs to happen for people to be saved so that we be part of his redemptive work in people's lives.

It ought to drive us out to the very ends of the earth. In fact, all of the significant missionary movements have been led by people who held this doctrine, who believed it was true that God has a people that he's saving and they're going to be numbered amongst every tribe, nation, and tongue.

[25 : 22] It ought to press us out everywhere. There's divine purpose in God's divine provision. Jesus says down in verse 44, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

And I know that you could go either way with this language, right? Maybe everybody's being drawn and therefore anybody can. I don't think it fits contextually with everything else that Jesus has said, but I'm willing to allow for that there.

But I do want you to know that the word here, translated draw, is used in extra-biblical Greek literature to refer to drawing water out of a well.

So forcefully bringing water up to the surface. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day.

I think this is why. I think this is all on either side of what I'm going to show you is the center, the chiastic center of this text. We're structuring it this way to try to understand how is it that these people, these people who have seen the miraculous provision of Christ in the bread, they've heard tales certainly of him walking on water, why are they missing him in the process?

[27 : 02] Third point, there's divine promise. In the divine provision, there is divine promise. Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

There it is. That's what the provision is for. I've mentioned it already. It's for eternal life. Spiritual life.

Now and forever more. Jesus calls himself, verse 48, the bread of life. Right?

Your fathers ate that manna that you mentioned, and they died. Right? It didn't provide forever nourishment, but the bread that comes down from heaven verse 50, can be eaten of and a person will not die.

They will have eternal life. Jesus says, I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

[28 : 12] And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. He will give up his very body so that we might have eternal life in him.

John records Jesus defining what eternal life is in John chapter 17 and verse 3. This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Beloved, the great joy of the gospel is that we get to know God and that he knows us. We don't come to Jesus for what he can grant us in this life.

We come to him for him in this life and forevermore. So there's divine provision. Found in this text.

Secondly, let's look at the human appropriation. I think the reason I told you the aside about John MacArthur is I just didn't want you to think that I came up with the word appropriation by myself.

[29 : 29] This was all his doing. I think because of the quick strong P in the word. Appropriation means to make one's own, right? To take possession of.

So we must take possession of this bread of life. And I am happy, really happy with texts like this that we see in both sovereign grace, God working with each other whatsoever.

And I think that's how we should take it up as well. to show you this, I shrunk down the text very tiny inside your bulletin. I'm sorry if your eyes are failing like mine is.

I could barely read it myself when I shrunk it down that small. That's 7.5 font if you care to know. I just want you to notice the chiastic structure.

Again, so chiasm comes from the Greek letter for X, chi. So it has a shape to it. So I put it in that shape for you and you can see how the beginning corresponds to the end.

[30 : 39] So A and then A prime. I'm hoping you can see that. That you could fold it in the middle and it would fold over on top of itself. I won't walk you through all of these because it's not really important to do so.

But notice like verse 31, our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. And then verse 49, your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness.

Don't these texts seem so incredibly complicated until you start to see this happening? I hope that when I read it to you for the first time, you might have been going, I'm starting to see the chiastic structure. I hope this starts to live in your head because it's all over the book of John.

There are a lot of other places in the Bible and it's incredibly cool what these authors are doing. Now, did Jesus say this exactly this way? I don't think so.

It's not terribly but I think, led by the Spirit of Christ, John pins it in this way to make a careful point to us about the teaching of Jesus.

[31 : 41] So, again, I'll just show you another spot as we get closer and closer. Verse 41 and then verse 43. So the Jews grumbled and then Jesus, verse 43, do not grumble, which brings us to the center of the text.

So you're supposed to, put on verse 42 like as an interpretive lens to look at the rest of it. Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know?

Like we know where he came from is what they're saying. How does he now say I have come down from heaven? They don't believe that he is the Christ.

So you have this filter of unbelief, right, as Jesus is working through this teaching. And the structure of it is meant simply to help us remember it but also to draw our attention to that very fact.

So as he has said some massive things about sovereign grace was meant to have our attention drawn to the rejection of Jesus as the Christ.

[32:53] We must appropriate the bread of life. we must make him our own. I included in the bulletin as well a quotation from J.I.

Packer. This is found in a little book he wrote called Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God. A fantastic read. And there he quotes Charles Spurgeon. So it's old guy quotation inception.

C.H. Spurgeon once said, was once asked if he could reconcile these two truths to each other. I wouldn't try, he replied. I never reconcile friends.

Friends? Yes, friends. This is the point that we have to grasp. In the Bible, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not enemies.

They are not uneasy neighbors. They are not in an endless state of cold war with each other. They are friends and they work together.

[33:56] Now to try to be logicians and work our way through the entirety of all of that is not really the point. And I have gone round and round with people. I have read countless books on the subject.

It's a thing worth thinking about. But I just want you to note today that they both exist in the text together. There is a mystery in that.

I think sometimes I just want to be a little more simple minded than I often am. Just look at the text and go, yeah, it's right there. I see it. It's clear.

It says it. And then go, uh-huh, and it also says that too. Trust that God is wiser, certainly more intelligent than I am, and he's given us this book in this way for a reason.

So, there must be a human appropriation. There's a responsibility for people to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ, to respond to him, the bread of life.

[34:59] We must first come. We must go to Jesus. Verse 35 says, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

He indicts them in verse 36, but I said to you that you have seen me, they had come, and yet you do not believe.

So, the reason I'm pulling out the idea of coming and separating it from the idea of believing is I just want to be clear for a moment. It's, you could think that you're coming, you can think that going to church, think that reading the Bible, think that consuming some social media Christian stuff, right, watching online sermons, whatever it may be, some way that you think you're coming to Jesus is salvific, but if you don't believe, if you don't take hold of who he is and what he's accomplished, coming, just coming is not sufficient for the salvation of your soul.

Verse 47, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. What must we believe? Both in his person, that's why I looped in the divine preexistence, Jesus himself is God.

He lived a perfect life, he died a sacrificial death, a death that he did not deserve, raised on the third day, right, his person and his work.

[36:52] And we must go to the Jesus of the Bible and believe in the Jesus of the Bible. As a side note, I'm so concerned about so much that we see that's wrapped in thin candy coating called gospel.

people. And it's really just moralistic, therapeutic deism. Jesus is a therapist. He's not the Lord of the universe.

And I see it happening and it's happening in these really subversive ways all around us. Let's be careful. People who use the same language we're using are actually going to the same Christ.

Ask good clarifying questions. Let's press in on people who are professing faith. in a Jesus that might be a Jesus of their own making. We must go to him and we must believe in his person and his work.

Verse 50, this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

[38:04] And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. He's talking about the sacrifice that he will make. And this is made clear as the text goes on, which we'll get into further next week.

But note in verse 52 and then verse 53, the Jews then disputed among themselves saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? So Jesus said to them, I'm going to bring you more clarity on the matter.

He says to them, truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

If you don't believe that the Messiah is the one who will come and he will conquer, not in the way you think, but he'll conquer by taking on the sins of the world, dying, bearing the wrath of God for them, rising three days later, sending his spirit, building his kingdom.

We find ourselves in that age even now. Let's pray together.