

John 6:52-59

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] Amen. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in John chapter 6. Our text for today is John chapter 6 verses 52 through 59.

! While you're getting there, I want to talk to you a little bit about our upcoming preaching schedule through the end of the year. Just to kind of give you a little bit of an idea of the trajectory that we are headed on.

First, this will be my last week preaching for some time. So the next two weeks, we're going to finish out John chapter 6.

And Francis Rojas is going to come and preach for us. I'm really looking forward to that. He is studying the chiastic structure. So, pleased, really pleased with that.

The two weeks after that, we're going to take a little bit of a break from John. And TJ Fisher and Alex Kohler, not as a tag team duo, but in two separate weeks, are going to walk through the parable of the sower from Matthew chapter 13.

[1:05] And then, if you can believe it, we're into Advent season. It's already upon us, just four Sundays away after this Lord's Day.

So, as we have traditionally, we're going to preach through the Advent themes. Hope, joy, peace, love, and various elders are going to take care of that. Somehow, in the history of our church, it became a tradition that I don't preach those Advent themes.

And I'm happy for that, because December is a crazy month, isn't it? And the guys really kindly jump in and give me a little bit of space for that. I also want to let you know that I am going to be taking a sabbatical.

It wasn't planned to do so this year, but your elders really love me and care well for my soul. They know how incredibly busy I am and thin I'm running.

So, I never take a break and do nothing. There's always something going on in the service of the church. So, I kind of want to call them planning sabbaticals. Big step back, kind of out of the fray, taking a look at next year.

[2:08] Lots of time in the Word and prayer, thinking about where the Lord may be leading us into 2026. I'm going to be doing that mid-November into the beginning of December.

You'll hear more about it. I won't be entirely gone, but a number of responsibilities I'll set aside for that time. So, there we are. That's what we're up to. Really happy that I could be here with you this morning and looking once again at John chapter 6.

Before I pray and read the text, I want to remind you where we've been in this chapter. So, there's a couple of miracles that take place. And in John's pattern, we see the record of miracles and then teaching.

So, at the beginning of John 6, Jesus feeds the 5,000. And to highlight these, I've been arguing to you that there's a particular literary structure used all throughout this book.

If you don't know what a chiasm is, I've outlined today's text for you in the bulletin so you can kind of see it. The way the text can fold on top of itself, that corresponds. And the central point of that particular section of Scripture is meant to draw our attention.

[3 : 25] Give us an interpretive lens. Help us to understand it a bit deeper. So, when Jesus feeds the 5,000, the central verse is John chapter 6 and verse 10, where he says, Have the people sit down.

And John adds, Now there was much grass in the place. Jesus being seen as the great shepherd, as John chapter 10 corresponds to John chapter 6.

Leaving this miracle, The apostles go on across the sea. And Jesus joins them later by walking on water. And he calms that storm and takes them immediately to the other side.

And when they see him, understandably in verse 19, they're afraid. And he says to them in verse 20, Again, this is the central piece of that passage. It is I, or you could translate that, I am, declaring himself to be God.

And then says, Do not be afraid. And it's after this that he arrives at the shore. And he's in Capernaum.

[4 : 43] And the bread of life discourse begins. This mob that he fed on one side of the sea has now come around to the other side of the sea. And they're seeking him.

But he says in verse 26 and 27, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

They were coming to him for temporary, temporal food. And then he says in verse 27, 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.

For on him God the Father has set his seal. And then the bread of life discourse continues, which we looked at last week.

And the emphasis of that next section is the rejection of Jesus as the bread of life. The central part of that text is verse 42, where they said, Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

[5 : 51] How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? We're going to see all of this continue on in today's text and on through the end of the chapter.

The rejection of Jesus by the Jews, largely. And then some acceptance of him toward the end of the chapter. The section from last Sunday concludes with the following words, which will get us into our text for today.

So I'll begin reading in verse 48. Jesus says, 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. 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. Which brings us to verse 52. Before I read it, let's pray together.

[6 : 57] Father, help us, we pray, as we take up your word together this morning. We want to rightly understand it and apply it. And we humbly recognize that we absolutely need your help to do so.

This was written for your glory and for our good. And we want to believe its promises and obey its commands and have affection for you, its author. So we ask that you would help us to this end.

And we pray it in Christ's name. Amen. John chapter 6, beginning in verse 52. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

So Jesus said 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. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

[8 : 07] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven.

Not like the bread the fathers ate and died, whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum.

So notice first, before we get into our outline, the structure of the text. And again, I included that in there for you. I won't spend much time on walking through it detail by detail, but I hope it helps you see why is there repetition repetition in the way that Jesus is speaking and the way John records this dialogue.

It's important, right? Again, drawing our attention to a central point. It doesn't mean the other parts aren't important, but it's meant to help us think as we think about the entirety of the text.

So notice verse 55, For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.

[9 : 18] Something for us to meditate on across the rest of today and into the rest of the week. What does Jesus mean? My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.

I hope our bit of time together in this text will help us comprehend all that's contained therein. So our outline today, number one, the offense of the invitation.

And we see this in verse 52, right? After this statement, this beginning of this discourse that Jesus is giving, the Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Now, no reasonable person would think at this point that Jesus is suggesting cannibalism and offering up himself for a meal.

But this seems to be what they're doing. I don't know the entire nature of the dispute that they have, but the question they ask is, How is it possible that this man can give us himself to eat?

[10 : 33] The fact that they disputed means that they argued sharply with one another. It's a very strong Greek verb.

They get into a conflict with one another about what he means by this. He's not at all being literal. Of course, he is speaking in metaphor.

Had anybody been paying any attention to everything he said up to this point, they would know it's a metaphor. But what is it that he means?

They argue about this. I think the thing that's most important to note here is the attitude of their unbelief.

Who do they turn to when they don't understand what it is that he is saying? Not to him. They're not seeking from the Savior to understand what he might mean.

[11 : 34] He says something difficult for them to understand, and who do they turn to? To one another. They do not ask him for clarification. They turn to each other in bitter conflict.

They dispute. They argue sharply. They philosophize about what could be meant by such a thing instead of listening to the Savior and seeking to understand what he means by having life in him.

This is the way. This is the nature of the Gospel. It's offensive to those who don't believe. How could this be so?

Don't find yourself in this camp. Perhaps the Gospel comes to you and it strikes at your sinful heart. Seek clarity from the Savior.

Find yourself offended. Listen on. Understand more. There's such an offer given here. So secondly, we see in the text the necessity of saving faith.

[12:49] verse 53 and 54. In response to their dispute, Jesus adds something on top.

How can this man give us his flesh to eat? They say in verse 52. So, John records, Jesus said 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.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day. The Jews of this narrative had already found the idea of eating Jesus' flesh offensive.

But now Jesus expands the metaphor to drinking his blood. Why is this added?

Why is this compounding the offense? The law of Moses did not allow for the drinking of blood or the eating of meat with blood still in it.

[14:00] You can reference Leviticus 17, Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 12. This was pagan stuff.

So this addition to the metaphor just adds to the offense when the point of the metaphor is being missed.

So let's be very sure that we don't miss the point of the metaphor. Now a small aside I think is necessary here at this point.

Catholics, and some others, but predominantly Catholics, are quick to make these verses sacramental and use them to argue for transubstantiation, which is the belief that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper.

This is their run-to, go-to text. Now I suggest to you that there is some allusion to the supper in these verses. We could get some understanding of the supper, but that's not what's being taught about here.

[15:11] We should be very careful not to read more into the text than the purpose of the context in which it sits. It's a little hermeneutical exercise that could be done at this point, which I'll spare you.

So what is the point of the metaphor? Jesus, in suggesting that his flesh and blood must be consumed, is certainly referring to his soon-coming sacrifice and teaching those who will hear him that identification with his death grants the believer life.

believing that he is the Christ and that his body will be broken and his blood will be spilt. Listen to the preceding verses.

Just a few. John 6, verse 28 and 29. Then they said to him, what must we do to be doing the works of God? How do we please God?

Jesus answered them, verse 29, this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent. Don't separate that out of the context.

[16:31] There it is. The work is believe. Eat the flesh and drink the blood is the metaphor to help us understand what it is we're to believe in.

Another place, verse 40, 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.

Don't overcomplicate what the metaphor means. Identify, believe in Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf. Previously, I read, leading into this text, verse 48 through 51.

Listen to it now with verse 47 added. So this is John 6, verse 47 and following. 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. Temporal, temporal provision and they died.

[17:39] 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 and in your eats of this bread he will live forever and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

And this is what causes the commotion amongst them, the unbelief and the conflict that follows. All of this need not become more complicated than this.

our souls will hunger and they will thirst until they find their full satisfaction in Christ.

Our souls long to be restored in relationship to the Father and this comes through the sacrificial work of Jesus on behalf of his people.

We just have to believe that that's true. this happens when we take hold of who he is and what he has accomplished for all who will believe in him.

[18:49] That's what Jesus is teaching in the Bread of Life discourse. A quotation that I included in your bulletin on this text this is Charles Spurgeon talking about this text he said God be thanked for the simplicity of the gospel.

The longer I live the more I bless God that we have not received a classical gospel or a mathematical gospel or a metaphysical gospel it is not a gospel confined to scholars and men of genius but a poor man's gospel a plowman's gospel for that is the kind of gospel which we can live upon and die upon it is not to us sorry it is not to us not the luxury of refinement but the staple food of life.

You want life and eternal life? It comes by being sustained by Jesus himself. So we see in verse 53 and 54 the necessity of saving faith justified by grace through faith in Christ alone.

But praise God it doesn't end there. Our justification is a wonderful thing to glory in but he goes on verses 55 through 57 we see thirdly the union of the living the union the uniting of the living here we see the for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink again temporal food providing for temporal life but Jesus providing for eternal life and then he presents the most precious of ideas it's an idea that I just love to ponder and John uses a word he is rather fond of to help us to understand this idea Jesus says verse 56 whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood and you can insert there whoever believes in me abides in me and I in him it's the Greek word meno m-e-n-o abides remains dwells it's the idea of a fixed place of belonging the one who believes in Jesus belongs in him and likewise

Jesus takes up residence in the believer this is an extraordinarily special relationship union being united with Christ so I said the union of the living right Jesus lives and we live in him let's look at some other places that John uses this word to understand just how special this relationship is you turn back to John chapter 1 and verse 32 he records there John the Baptist bearing witness it says and John bore witness he quotes him I saw the spirit the holy spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained abided dwelt on him so you see the picture of the son

[22:50] God the son and God the spirit being united together now turn past our text to John chapter 14 and verse 10 John 14 and verse 10 there Jesus says do you not believe that I am in the father and the father is in me the words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority but the father who dwells in me does his works again same same word being the same Greek word being used there we saw it translated remained in chapter 1 verse 32 we see it here in John 14 verse 10 as dwells we see it in our text as abides we're going to see it in a moment in the same way God the son and God the father united dwelling together you're getting the specialness of this relationship this is what we're being invited into if we believe in Christ one more place go a little bit further

John chapter 15 and verse 10 there Jesus says if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love dwell remain belong forever what is Jesus teaching us in these few words whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him life is ours by faith in Christ because we are united to him in his death and in his resurrection not just in his death but also in his resurrection when God looks at us he sees Jesus if we have placed our faith in him the idea of being clothed in Christ's righteousness this little phrase in

Christ appears again and again and again it's such a beautiful beautiful idea Jesus goes on in verse 57 as the living father sent me and I live because of the father so whoever feeds on me he also will live because of me why because we are united to him look at the same idea not using that same Greek word but look at the idea elsewhere in John chapter 14 again verse 18 through 20 there Jesus is talking about departing but he says in verse 18 I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you yet a little while in the world will see me no more but you will see me because I live you also will live in that day you will know that I am in my father and you in me and

I in you united to Christ by belief in him Paul teaches the same different phrase I mentioned it already two sweet words in Christ he writes in Romans chapter 6 verse 23 for the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord and in Romans chapter 8 and verse 1 there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus but not only are all who believe in Jesus in Christ but also he is in us mentioned already John chapter 14 and verse 20 let's know what Paul says in Colossians 1 verse 27 to his saints

God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this majesty which is Christ in you the hope of glory so we're united to him we're positionally in him we belong to God in Christ and he dwells in us by the spirit it's an astounding reality hard to comprehend all that it means look for these phrases that are again and again and again placed all throughout the text to help us wrap our little feeble minds around the blessing that is ours by belief in Jesus D.A.

[28 : 03] Carson who wrote a wonderful commentary on John's gospel says this quote the mutual indwelling pictured here is obviously not precisely reciprocal!

That the believer remains in Jesus means he or she continues to be identified with Jesus continues as a Christian continues in saving faith and consequent transformation of life that Jesus remains in the believer means that Jesus identifies with the believer but not in the reciprocal trust and transformation that would be absurd Jesus doesn't need to trust in me I need to trust in him but in help blessing life and personal presence amen what a thing what a thing to be united with the living and then notice lastly the last part of the text verse 58 verse 59 just places us back in the chiastic structure they're arguing in the synagogue and he's teaching in the synagogue verse 58 notice the superiority of the savior superiority of the savior jesus says this is the bread that came down from heaven not like the bread the fathers ate and died!

that manna that was provided as god's people were carrying after the exodus in the wilderness to provide for their temporal need jesus says whoever feeds on this bread will live forever jesus is revealed throughout the old testament in types and shadows they abound they're all over the place the old testament is constantly meant to be saying to us not this not this not this not this not this look to a coming one who is the greater the superior to all of these things he is seen in events like the exodus in people like Melchizedek and David Joshua Moses in places like the tabernacle place where God dwelt amongst men and in objects like

Noah's ark the Passover lamb the bronze serpent and the manna the bread from heaven right jesus picks this up in a metaphor right to say temporal bread I am the superior version of that right that was just a shadow of me he indicts the Jews in John chapter 5 verse 39 where he says you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness about me but they failed to come to him Jesus is the substance of all the types and shadows search the scriptures and have them lead you to the one whom you can have life eternal life in by belief in his person and his work on your behalf a couple of quick applications and we'll close our time firstly

Jesus must not be merely admired! We've talked about this Jesus can't just be a good moral teacher this is what the world wants to do with him all the time right he must be Lord he must be received!

[31 : 58] He must understand all that he is on behalf of his! Jesus was not! speculation in the bread of life discourse he wasn't asking him to start philosophizing about what he could possibly mean he was pressing belief we must draw our very life from him place absolute trust in his saving work if you have believed in Christ second point of application rest in Jesus work on your behalf it's a completed task it is finished the work of God is to believe in his son we sang just some moments ago a song that's new-ish to us introduced last Sunday we sang again this Sunday called all sufficient merit and the point is that the merit is not ours but it's given to us verse 4 says all sufficient merit firm in life and death the joy of my salvation shall be my final breath when

I stand accepted before the throne of God I'll gaze upon my Jesus and thank him for the cross yes I'll thank him for the cross and the chorus it is done it is finished no more debt I owe paid in full all sufficient merit now my own rest in Jesus finished work on your behalf and then as a loop back to my random aside as we take the Lord's Supper together as a church we do this each Lord's Day we call it our members gathering it happens before this time take the Lord's Supper as a sign of Christ's saving work help it draw your mind to this great reality of what it means to feast on Christ Spurgeon once said there is no magic in bread or wine but oh there is infinite grace in

Christ crucified let's pray together as