

The Bread of Life

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[0 : 00] Now, we come to our Bible reading, and this week we're back in the book of John, reading from chapter 6, verse 25, through to the end of the chapter.

Edward Lobb will be preaching for us as we continue this series, looking through the great I am statements that Jesus makes in the Gospel of John, which so often caused controversy and consternation with those he was dialoguing with.

So let's read together. John chapter 6, starting at verse 25. 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. 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.

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.

[1 : 43] 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.

[2 : 52] 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 this not 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 amongst 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.

[3 : 59] 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.

The Jews then disputed amongst 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. 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.

[5 : 10] 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.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, do you take offense at this?

Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all.

The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.

And he said, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

[6 : 23] So Jesus said to the twelve, do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

Jesus answered them, did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil. He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. For he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and may he bless it to us today. Well, good morning, friends.

Friends here at Kelvin Grove and elsewhere, too. Can we turn to John's Gospel, chapter six? And as you know, we're continuing in our series on the I Am sayings of Jesus.

And the I Am saying, well, there's more than one, actually, but the main I Am saying in John, chapter six, comes at verse 35. Perhaps you'd look at that with me. Verse 35. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

[7 : 42] Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Now, we'll get into the meat of the chapter in a few minutes' time, but first, let me say a few things by way of preliminaries to set the scene.

At this stage in John's account of the life of Jesus, Jesus has just fed an enormous crowd of people. And the story is told in the first part of chapter six.

It's the incident known as the feeding of the 5,000. There might have been many more than 5,000 present, actually. You'll see that verse 10 tells us that there were 5,000 men.

And the word used there describes adult men. So when you take women and children into account as well, there could have been 10 or 15,000 people. So a vast crowd were fed.

And verse 9 tells us that Jesus had at his disposal five barley loaves and two fish, slender resources with which to feed such a huge crowd.

[8 : 48] But he did it, demonstrating his complete authority over the created world. So we see here the creator at work. Now a little bit on the geography.

Have a look at verse 1, and you'll see where Jesus and this great crowd were. They were, says verse 1, on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

That means the eastern side in Gentile territory. That's where the miracle took place. And then in the evening, after the miracle, verse 16 tells us that the disciples, that means the 12, got into a boat and started to row back across the sea towards Capernaum.

That would have been six or eight miles across the water up in the northwestern corner of the Sea of Galilee. Then we read that after dark, Jesus came to them, walking on the water.

And they quickly reached their destination once they'd taken him into the boat. Then on the following day, look at verse 22, the crowd realized that Jesus had left the eastern side of the lake, and many of them crossed the lake in small boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus, as it's put in verse 24.

[10 : 02] Now why should they have come seeking Jesus? Well, surely because of the great miracle. He had just fed them the day before, and they must have been hoping for a repeat performance.

But Jesus says to them in verse 26, You are seeking me because you ate your fill of the loaves. Now you can understand why they were so keen to see him again.

Many of these people would have been poor, peasant farmers, living on the bread line. There was no Liddle, no Aldi around the corner. And they had discovered a wonderful source of fresh bread.

You can understand them wanting more. But they didn't get it, because Jesus now wanted to teach them. They needed his teaching far more than a second round of free bread and fish.

So he then gives them this long section of teaching, beginning at verse 26. And his main point in this big teaching section is to say to them, You don't need another feeding miracle.

[11:04] What you need is me. Fresh bread can only fill your bellies for a few hours. But if you will feed on me and get me into your system, your hunger and thirst will be satisfied forever.

Permanently. Eternally. I'm the bread of life. Not the bread of brief belly satisfaction. If you come to me and believe in me, you will be satisfied forever.

Now, their response to this is not straightforward, because they simply don't understand what he's on about. Look at verse 41. Some of the Jews listening to him begin to grumble, because he has said, I'm the bread that has come down from heaven.

Now, this remark puzzled them, because in verse 42 they say, The bread that comes down from heaven, isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his family.

We know his father and mother. We've known him since he was a small boy in short trousers. So how can he say, I've come down from heaven? We know he comes from the back streets of Nazareth, not from heaven.

[12:12] And then there's a lot more to puzzle them as the teaching develops. Just look onto verse 52. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

That's what he's just said in verse 51. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Now, it's mystifying to them. So he begins to explain it in verses 53 and 54.

He says, 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.

And as he develops this theme of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, which is really an unpacking of verse 35, many of them begin to take offense at him.

You see this in verse 60. Verse 60, When many of his disciples heard it, they said, This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, Do you take offense at this?

[13:27] Well, the answer is, Yes, they do. They take offense at it. And look on to verse 66. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

Now, these so-called disciples here in verse 60 and verse 66, these are not the 12 apostles. These are people who have been following Jesus in a half-hearted, non-committal kind of way.

People who've been drawn to him because of his miracles, but they're now turning away from him because his teaching was becoming most uncomfortable and they were growing suspicious of him. He's come down from heaven, has he? Heaven. And he wants us to feed on his flesh and to drink his blood. They must have been thinking, Cannibalism?

Are we in vampire bat territory? Now, the truth is, in the early church, in the early centuries of the Christian church, opponents of the gospel sometimes criticized Christians for cannibalism.

[14:28] You people, when you meet together for your Sunday morning worship, are you eating your God every week? That's what they said. Now, what we need to grasp is that Jesus is using a vivid metaphor in verses 54 and 55.

He's not inviting his followers to think cannibalistic thoughts. He's talking about his death on the cross, where his flesh was to be broken and mutilated and his blood was to be shed in death.

And when he speaks of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, he's teaching us to depend upon his death on the cross and to regard it as the sustenance and nourishment that we need to bring us right through life and then through death and all the way through to eternal life.

So there's a clear parallel between the physical food that we need to sustain our physical life on earth and the spiritual food which we need in order to be brought to heaven.

So physically, in this world, we need our daily intake of bread, meat, vegetables, and so on in order to survive day after day. And spiritually, we need to feed on the benefits of Christ's death on the cross in order to be brought to heaven.

[15:47] Now the striking thing about this bread metaphor is that it shows us just how close the Lord Jesus is to his followers. He is asking us metaphorically to eat him, to ingest him.

He's not saying follow me at a distance. He's saying to his people, you and I are involved. Just look on to verse 56 here. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.

So to be a Christian is to live in him and it's for him to live in us. Now he's going to develop this abide in me teaching when he gets to chapter 15 where he speaks of himself as the vine and his disciples as the branches.

And with this metaphor his people draw their life from him as the branches of the vine draw their vital sap from the central stem. Both the vine metaphor and this bread metaphor are about Jesus being the source of our life.

The difference between the two is that in the vine metaphor it's his life that gives us life whereas in the bread metaphor it's his death that gives us life.

[17:05] So our eternal life is sourced from both his death and his life from both his crucifixion and his resurrection. Now this chapter 6 is about his crucifixion as he puts it in verse 51 the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

So to eat his flesh and to drink his blood means to acknowledge repeatedly and joyfully that we are trusting his death as the means of being accepted into God's heavenly kingdom.

Now the Holy Communion service that we celebrate of course picks up on this metaphor but chapter 6 is not about the Holy Communion it's about the death of Jesus.

Now I hope this has just begun to open up the territory a little and to give us some clues as to what this chapter is all about and I want to turn now to some of the details which I hope will gladden our hearts and make us feel more steady and more confident in our faith.

Let's go back then to verse 35 our key verse. Jesus says to them I am now that's the divine name of God which God the Father revealed to Moses at the burning bush many centuries before.

[18:20] So in using this phrase I am Jesus is clearly asserting that he is God incarnate. I am the bread of life he says whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Now here is the big point Jesus is the only one who can fill our core emptiness the emptiness and longing which lies deep in every human heart.

Now it goes without saying that all of us are complex creatures we know that we're made up of all sorts of bits and pieces. We have bodies we have minds we have emotions we have joys and sorrows fears and frustrations and we're a bit like Marmite.

There are parts of ourselves that we like there are other parts of ourselves that we very much dislike and would like to be rid of. But underlying this complex mixture of thought and emotion there is an emptiness that seeks to be filled a sense of longing even though we don't always know what we long for.

But in verse 35 here Jesus is promising that everyone who comes to him and believes in him will have that inner hunger and thirst satisfied.

[19:38] Now this is not a promise it cannot be a promise that the Christian life will be free of pain. Jesus is going to say to all his followers in chapter 15 if the world hates you know that it hated me before it hated you.

Remember the word that I said to you a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me they will persecute you as well. In other words every serious disciple of Jesus is certain to suffer antagonism from people who reject Christ as Savior.

It is simply inevitable. In fact this is one reason why we need to stick together and support each other. Jesus in fact goes on to say at the end of chapter 16 in this world you will have tribulation.

There are no ifs and buts about it. You will have tribulation. So this bread of life promise cannot be a promise that the Christian life is going to be rather like sitting forever in a deck chair on a Caribbean beach eating prawn kebabs.

No, it is going to bring suffering with it. But deep inside our hungry hearts and thirsty souls Jesus promises to fill us with something that is immensely satisfying and steadying and joy engendering.

[20:57] Now just think for a moment about the inside of the head of a hard-bitten atheist. That is not I think a happy place.

The modern atheist typically thinks something like this. Planet Earth and all its life forms are just the result of a random cosmic coincidence.

there is no purpose in any of it. And human beings likewise simply happened. It is just accidental.

So the reality of our lives is that it is a great howling darkness a bit like being in Antarctica in a never-ending winter.

And we keep this darkness at bay by busying ourselves with work and sport and food and music and sex and partying and adventurous traveling.

but we do these things just to fend off the desolate wilderness of our inner life which we dare not look too deeply into. Now in John 6.35 Jesus is implicitly acknowledging this fundamental emptiness which each one of us is born with.

[22 : 05] And he is saying to us come to me and the emptiness will be filled and your hunger for reality and joy will be satisfied. Believe in me and your thirst for truth and love and meaning will be slaked.

So the Christian ends up in a very different place from the atheist. Now the Christian still of course has to cope with what Shakespeare called the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

We still have to cope with painful bereavements illnesses of body and mind and a thousand other difficulties large and small. But there is in the Christian's heart a deep assurance an assurance that God is in charge of our lives that he sometimes allows us to suffer extremely painful things but that all things do work together for good in the lives of those who are called to belong to Jesus.

The full measure of what Jesus promises in verse 35 is ultimately to be enjoyed in the world to come. But we really do experience a great deal of this inner joy and satisfaction in this world and in this life.

If we're Christians we have the certain knowledge of our sins being forgiven. We have the assurance that a place is prepared for us in heaven. We have the love and support of many other Christians.

[23 : 30] To be in the church gives us a wealth of pleasure and joy which the atheist knows nothing about. So let me say if you're still an atheist or an agnostic don't stay that way.

Look at the church. You're sitting in the midst of it at this very moment. Don't teeter on the brink of the swimming pool. Dive in. Become part of this family. It's not an esoteric cult.

It's not weird. There's nothing weird that goes on behind closed doors. To become a Christian is to become a human being in the fullest sense. It has always been true that the de-godding of God is the unmaning of man.

To come to Christ to believe in him that's what we were made for. So when you become a Christian you begin immediately to be reconstructed remade refashioned in the image of Christ who is the perfection of humanity.

To come to him and believe in him is what our verse 35 is all about. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

[24 : 40] So the way to exit the desolate wilderness of agnosticism or atheism is to come to Christ who is the bread of life who is the source of real sustenance and real satisfaction.

Jesus is the only one who can fill our core emptiness. Now having seen what verse 35 is all about or beginning to see at least I want now to look at various other aspects of what Jesus is teaching in this long passage because there's a lot here which will help us to understand what lies behind verse 35.

We shan't be able to look at all the details it's a long chapter but I want us to pick up the scent as clearly as we can. So first we'll look at Moses and the manna in the wilderness.

Now as we've seen this great crowd of people have been fed on the previous day and clearly they are hugely excited because they have witnessed an astonishing miracle.

So they pile into as many boats as they can find they cross the water and they find Jesus at Capernaum and he says to them in verse 26 you are seeking me because you ate your fill of the loaves.

[25 : 57] But he goes straight on in verse 27 don't labor for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life which the son of man will give to you.

So he's making a distinction here he's distinguishing between food that perishes by which of course he means bread fish, meat apple pies anything which will go moldy if it's not eaten quickly that's the food that perishes our physical food and he's distinguishing that from another type of food which is imperishable food food that endures to eternal life.

But the people listening to him are just not getting his meaning. However they do have a little bit of Old Testament history locked away in the back of their minds. So they say to him in verse 31 our fathers that means our forefathers many centuries ago at the manna in the wilderness as it is written he gave them bread from heaven to eat implying that it was Moses who gave them the

manna and that's why Jesus says to them in verse 32 it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven but my father gives you the true bread from heaven and then in verse 33 he tells them what this true bread is.

He says for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world meaning of course himself. But they're just not getting it.

They're still thinking of fresh crusty loaves like the delicious ones they had at yesterday's miracle. So they say to him in verse 34 thinking of crusty loaves sir give us this bread always.

[27 : 43] They're thinking it's going to be a life of leisure for us now it'll be wonderful. We're going to get three loaves every day if we can keep this man with us. Gone will be the days of getting up at six every morning and plowing the fields with a broken winded cart horse.

I'll be able to pop down to the village square every morning and pick up the fresh bread for the day and the rest of the day I'll be able to sit in my deck chair and read the paper. If you look back to verse 15 you'll see that just after the miracle the people wanted to take him by force and make him king.

So that they could have his power on tap. So that he would create bread and fish and perhaps other things every day. They're thinking purely on the physical and material level.

But when they say to him give us this bread always this physical bread he comes straight back at them and he says I am the bread of life. You people need a radical recalibration of your thinking.

It's not about physical bread it's about me. But they don't understand. And that's why he has to say sadly in the very next verse verse 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

[28 : 58] You don't grasp that my true origin is heaven that if you come to me you will not hunger or thirst. Now John the evangelist in presenting Jesus to us is making the point that Jesus fulfills many patterns and templates which we find in the Old Testament.

And here in the case of John chapter 6 the Old Testament pattern is the manner that sustained the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness. It was physical food and it kept them alive for those 40 years all the way to the promised land.

So it was a miraculous food and it really did come from God. But Jesus is the real bread that the manner was pointing forwards to. So he is the fulfillment of this pattern.

Look at his further explanation in verse 48. 48 I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manner 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. So the manner wonderful as it was in the time of Moses could not convey eternal life to the Israelites any more than a Warburton's loaf can bring eternal life to you and me.

[30 : 22] But Jesus is the bread of eternal life. To come to him and to believe in him is to have our yearnings and our longings satisfied forever. Eating the manner could only end in death but Jesus is the bread of life.

Now secondly here is a question raised in the passage. Who can come to believe in Jesus and thus enjoy eternal life? Well the answer is anybody and everybody who wants to.

Just look again at verse 35. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. whoever is one of the most important words in John's gospel.

The invitation is open to all but as Jesus sadly acknowledges in verse 36 you have seen me you people and yet you do not believe. So why is it that some believe in Jesus and others don't?

Well Jesus explains it in the next verse 37. All that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

[31 : 38] Just remember that wonderful promise never cast out. So what he's saying is that every person who comes to Jesus has been given to Jesus by God the Father. And then verse 44 focuses the issue even more clearly.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. So putting those two verses together the Father's gracious work is to give people to Jesus and to draw people to Jesus.

So this means that if you're a Christian the Father has gifted you to Jesus and has drawn you to Jesus. And it's that gifting and drawing that has enabled you to come to Jesus.

Now there are mysterious depths to all this that we can never hope to plumb. We're never going to understand why God should draw some people to Jesus and not others.

We're bound to say why me and not my friend or why me and not my cousin. We'll never know the answer to that. God is sovereign in his choice of who is to belong to the Lord Jesus.

[32 : 46] But one thing we can be sure about from all over the Bible and particularly from this passage and that is that Jesus is teaching both divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

He is teaching that God is sovereign in his choice and that each of us is responsible for making our choice. Verse 37 and verse 44 are emphasizing God's sovereign decision.

The Father gives people to Jesus. The Father draws people to Jesus. But equally Jesus is pressing home our human responsibility. Verse 35 he's saying come to me believe in me.

Now the atheist who wants to avoid coming to Christ might look at this and say of course this is illogical. If God is sovereign in drawing people to Christ if God draws some and not others how can you blame the ones who are not drawn to Christ by God the Father?

They have no choice in the matter. And look at me I'm an atheist. So obviously I am not being drawn to Jesus by the Father. Now we have to say to the atheist friend you're avoiding the issue.

[34 : 03] You're practicing a kind of selective deafness here because Jesus as well as teaching divine sovereignty is also pressing home human responsibility your responsibility.

He's saying to every person in the world come to me believe in me. He wouldn't be saying that if we were unable to respond. He's saying it to you Mr. Atheist because you do have the ability to respond.

Don't avoid the issue by claiming some kind of diplomatic immunity. Well let me press this home here in the Tron Church this morning. You may be listening to all this and you may be wanting to avoid coming to Christ because you're aware that to become a Christian would mean that your whole life will be subjected to an explosive revolution which indeed it would be.

to transfer the control of your life from yourself to the Lord Jesus involves radical change. But here's the question can you afford not to do it?

At the moment if I can put it like this you are eating the bread of death. Jesus says I'm the bread of life. Come to me believe in me and your thirst and hunger will be satisfied forever.

[35 : 19] Don't stay in the realm of death when the gateway to life is open and you can step through it. And to come to him is to come to the one who loves us and when you do come to him you'll realize that you have come to him because the father has drawn you to him.

So divine sovereignty and human responsibility always lie side by side in the Bible and the authors of the Bible books like John the evangelist never show the slightest embarrassment in putting these two things side by side.

To John as to Jesus God is always sovereignly in control and human beings are always personally responsible. Well now thirdly I want us to see why many of those who had begun to follow Jesus or appeared to be followers of him subsequently turned away from him and we see this happening in the later parts of the chapter.

Let me pick up this trail at verse 56 if you'd like to follow with me verse 56 Jesus says whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him 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 as the father said and died whoever feeds on this bread will live forever Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum and when many of his disciples heard it they said this is a hard saying who can listen to it and Jesus knew that these people were beginning to take offense at him he then gives them some further teaching insisting in verse 63 that his words are spirit and life but he has to say with sadness at verse 64 but there are some of you who do not believe and then sure enough many of these so-called disciples turned back in verse 66 and no longer walked with him so what was their problem they didn't seem to grumble when he described himself as the bread of life but when he began to unpack and develop the bread of life metaphor when he began to explain that a real disciple feeds on his flesh and drinks his blood that was what they described as a hard saying in verse 60 that's the thing they were not prepared to listen to so what does

Jesus mean by feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood he means that it's his death on the cross that his real disciples will latch onto and put their trust in his real disciples will not take offense at the fact that he died a horrible body breaking and blood spilling death on the contrary they will be full of thankfulness that he was prepared to be led like a lamb to the slaughter that he was prepared to submit to crucifixion the human cruelty and he submitted to it because there was no other way there was no other way by which the penalty of our sins could be paid there was no other way by which to

receive God's forgiveness right back at the beginning of John's gospel in chapter one John the Baptist had pointed to Jesus and he said behold the

[39 : 05] Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world the Lamb of God and the Lamb means the Passover Lamb who is sacrificed as the substitute for the sinner so the Lamb loses his life so that the sinner's life can be spared that's the Bible's teaching about the death of Jesus that we're sinners we're rightly condemned under the wrath of God we deserve only death but Jesus standing in for us dying in our place has borne the wrath and punishment that we deserved so that we should be forgiven liberated from the wages of sin and able to enter eternal life now the problem is that some people still today take offense at this understanding this true understanding of the death of Jesus and they will say something like this first our sin cannot be so serious that it deserves to be punished by death second

God is love is he not now surely God is love and therefore cannot be thought of as being angry against our sin and third because God is love he could not be so hostile to sinners that he would send anyone to eternal death in hell now if you take up that position you simply eviscerate the cross of its true meaning and the cross simply becomes an example of how to bear injustice with courage and fortitude just an example of how to respond bravely to undeserved hatred now it is all that but all that is secondary the primary reason for the cross was that God loved the world he loved the humanity which had turned its back on him and out of this great love he gave his only son to bear the penalty for our sins so that we should not perish eternally but have everlasting life this is why Jesus gave his flesh up to crucifixion and shed his blood in death on the cross so that we should eternally benefit from his self-sacrifice to eat his flesh and to drink his blood is to say to him we accept gladly what you have done for us Lord Jesus as you've said yourself greater love has no man than this that a man should lay down his life for his friends you've laid down your life for us your friends so that the anger of God should be taken away from us and so that we should be forgiven so where does this leave us well it forces each one of us to ask the question am I prepared to be nourished by the bread of life if feeding on the bread of life means feeding on the crucified flesh of Jesus and drinking his blood if it means identifying with him believing in his crucifixion and taking up my own cross and being prepared to die for him if necessary am I prepared to go that far or would I prefer an eviscerated

Christianity which in the end is no Christianity just look back at the text here in verse 66 66 many of those who had started out with Jesus took offense at him and no longer walked with him they went back to their families their businesses their farms their trades they forgot about him they didn't want to be associated with a crucified Messiah so in verse 67 Jesus then turns to the 12 and he says to them do you want to go away as well and Simon Peter rough half formed Simon Peter gave a wonderful answer he said Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God in other words Lord Jesus we're sticking with you we're going nowhere and we're sticking with you because you have the words of eternal life the words it's your teaching that opens up the way to eternal life so we need to hear it and continue to hear it we're not going to find it anywhere else now of course

John the evangelist the author of this book was one of the twelve so he was present on this occasion he was standing there listening to this exchange between Jesus and Peter and many years later John wrote all this down and the result is this book which is full of the words of eternal life in fact you could subtitle John's gospel the gospel of life John actually tells us his purpose in writing this book at the very end of chapter 20 where he says these things I've written down so that you the reader may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name so that's what believing the gospel leads to life eternal life we live in a dying world a world dominated by death and the fear of death right the way through human society there runs a seam of sadness which all stems from the knowledge of our mortality people die wars famines floods pandemics people stand weeping at gravesides every day and in the midst of all this desolation

[44 : 59] Jesus has the words of eternal life we need to listen to them because they are the truth we shan't find them anywhere else have a look at verse 40 here in John chapter 6 verse 40 this is the will of my father that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life and here's the promise of Jesus I will raise him up on the last day at the very end of the Bible the book of Revelation opens up to us a glorious view of those who have eaten the bread of life and are now with Christ in heaven they shall hunger no more neither thirst any more the sun shall not strike

them neither any scorching heat for the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd and he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes

I am the bread of life says Jesus whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst rest well let's bow our heads and we'll pray together our wonderful Lord Jesus you allowed your flesh to be broken for us and your blood to be shed for us and all because you wanted us and you want us now to share your eternal home have mercy on us and give us the grace to believe the gospel to come to you the bread of life and to believe in you so that we might come to experience all that you promise the satisfying of our hunger and the quenching of our thirst in your eternal kingdom we ask it for your name's sake amen