

2025-02-23 - The Bread of Life - John 6

Worship in Song

Good morning, Cornerstone. Before we begin, I'd like to read some scripture to help us prepare our hearts as we come to worship.

This passage of Scripture comes from Psalm 63.

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.

The Word of God.

We can all stand and worship together, lifting our hands to the Lord with soft hearts.

- Good, Good Father
- Cornerstone
- Victory in Jesus

Father, we just sang those last words in that verse. You will come. You are coming back, and that is our hope. In the midst of all the trials, troubles, stresses, joys, triumphs, failures, and everything that life gives to us that we try to maneuver through, Lord, you are coming back. And we will be found in you, God. Our only righteousness comes from you, from your Son, the bloodshed on the cross for us. And then, on that day, when you come, we will stand faultless before the throne. Would you give us perseverance in Jesus' name, in Jesus' blood, and finished work on the cross? Would you give us perseverance to pursue you with all of our hearts, to deepen our relationship with you, and to stay with you, God, all in your power and all by your grace? We have victory, and it is in Christ. We proclaim that today as we continue our worship by the power of the Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Worship in the Word

Pastor Matt Yamada

Hey, good morning. So I love that song. "Victory In Jesus." I used to go to a very conservative church, and people typically, during worship, would never move, right? They would sing like this, but only during "Victory in Jesus." I can see them like that, and that song just brought me so many good memories.

Well, my name is Matt Yamada, and I am the associate pastor of this church. I typically lead the Japanese congregation of this church, but I love being here, sharing the word of God with you. So, it's been cold, right? Been very cold. And many of us have been catching colds, this virus is everywhere. So I just want to pray for those people who are not here today.

Also for the month of January and February tends to be darker, colder, and for those who are already feeling a little lonely, it typically intensifies. So, I also want to pray for comfort for those who are feeling lonely, who are feeling alone. And I pray that our church will continue to encourage those who feel that way. Let's begin with a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we come before you, praising you for who you are. Lord, we need you today. For those who are feeling under the weather, for those who are feeling lonely and alone. Lord, I pray that the spirit of Christ will be with them. I pray that you'll bring healing, you'll bring encouragement, and that through the work of Christ, they will know that you're always there. Your spirit is upon them. We love you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

So today, we're going to talk about sustenance. Sustenance, right. Food. Food. OK. Who likes food? Oh, good, good. Who likes to eat? Who likes to really, really eat? Now that I got you excited about food, I want you to take a moment to think about a food that you absolutely dislike.

Alright, maybe it's something from your childhood that your parents forced you to eat, right? The green stuff. Or maybe it's a texture or smell that you just can't tolerate. We have this Japanese dish called natto. Some of you might have had it. It's fermented soybean, and it smells rather unique. Back in college, it's a delicacy. I would open it and try to eat it, but my roommate would get up and leave the room. I always felt bad. But anyway, we all have foods we just don't like, right? And for me, it's fruit. I know. Who doesn't like fruit? But I just can't stand the taste of it, the texture, everything.

Well now, imagine yourself stranded in a desert for three days without any food. No food, no snacks, obviously no Uber Eats. Just the red hot sun burning your head. You're hungry. You're desperate for something, anything, to eat, to keep yourself alive. And in that very moment, if someone offered you the food you dislike, would you take it? Would you eat it?

Think you'll hesitate for a second? But you know if you don't eat this, you're going to die, right? So you'll eat it. When you're starving, what you like or don't like no longer matters. What will matter is survival.

So we can say that hunger has this unique way of changing our perspective. We have a 5-month-old in our home right now, and as all parents would know, when they're hungry, they're hungry. You can hear it anywhere.

But that cry is him saying, "I need food or else I die." It's a cry for survival. Food, sustenance, sustains life. And that's how God designed us. Our bodies were made to hunger, and we were made to crave sustenance. And just as physical food is necessary to sustain life, Scripture teaches us that our soul also hungers. Our soul gets hungry, but the issue of a hungering soul is that many of us don't even recognize it.

So now, imagine here with me a heart with a belly. I know it sounds weird, but go along with me here for a second. If the heart belly is not fed, the belly starts to shrink. Our hungry hearts will start looking to be filled. But what many of us try to do is fill our heart belly with things like approval from others. We feel good when parents think well of us, friends like us, or when everyone likes our post on social media.

Or wealth. We try to fill it with wealth. We feel satisfied when we're able to buy things or do things that we want, right? Or this vague idea of success, achieving your dreams. We consume these things thinking that they will satisfy, but no matter how much we achieve, own, or experience, that hunger returns. It comes back.

Maybe you've reached a milestone in your life, like getting into the school you wanted, graduating, getting married, having kids, getting your dream job, or getting a big promotion. And in that instance, you feel good. This is why I was working hard. But after a while, that hunger returns, right? The question here is not, "Do we need more of this?" but "Is the source we're looking to for satisfaction the right source?"

We get into this endless cycle of looking for satisfaction. We feel satisfied for a second, then we feel empty, and then we start looking for a different source of satisfaction. We keep doing this, thinking that one day, we will find the satisfaction we're looking for. Some of you are always restless, some of you are always anxious because you're looking for that next fill. The thing you thought would give you life might actually be draining life away from you. Jesus knows about this, and that's why in today's passage, he speaks to a crowd of people who are physically full yet spiritually hungry. He offers them something far greater than physical food. He offers them the Bread of Life. Bread of Life, the only thing that can truly satisfy humans, the only thing that can truly satisfy your soul and my soul.

Today, we will see how Jesus challenges the crowd's understanding of what truly sustains life. And throughout the sermon, I want you to ask yourself this question: **What are you feeding your soul with?** What are you feeding your soul with?

Today's passage is from John Chapter 6. If you have your Bibles with you, open to John Chapter 6. It's a rather long passage, with 72 verses. But before we dive into the heart of Jesus' teaching on the bread of life, let's look at what just happened in John 6.

John Chapter 6. Many of you are familiar with this story. It begins with 10,000 to 15,000 people at a hillside gathering around Jesus to hear his teaching. Jesus, at this point, is a popular teacher, right? A lot of people come to hear him, and now all these people are hungry. It's getting late. Jesus turns to one of his disciples, Philip, and asks, **"Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?" Philip replies, "Even if we had 200 denarii worth of bread, it wouldn't be enough for each of them to have a little."** He's basically saying, "Jesus, even if we had eight months' worth of wages, it still wouldn't be enough to give each person even a tiny Snickers bar." He's saying it's impossible.

Then another disciple sees a young boy with a small lunch, 5 barley loaves, and 2 fish. But he says, **"What good is that for such a huge crowd?"** Jesus, seeing this, instructs everyone to take a seat. Then he takes the bread, gives thanks, and starts distributing it. He keeps distributing, and the food never runs out. A miracle happens, and every single person eats until they are full. When the disciples collect the leftovers, they fill 12 baskets with what was left. The crowd is absolutely amazed. They're like, "Whoa, what is happening?" In verse 14, they say, **"This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world."** Verse 15 says that the people get so excited that they try to make Jesus their king. Why? Why are they trying to make Jesus king?

Well, because if Jesus can miraculously provide food like this every day, then surely he is the Messiah that they were looking for. During this time, Israel was under the oppression of Rome, and they were looking for this promised Messiah. They're like, "This guy, this miracle worker, this guy is it!" So they weren't interested in Jesus as the savior of their souls. They wanted a king who would meet their immediate needs and establish his kingdom. But Jesus doesn't accept this offer. He refuses. He knows their hearts, and he knows that they're seeking him for what he can do rather than who he is. So, instead of embracing their expectations, he withdraws. He withdraws.

That night, the disciples get into a boat and start rowing across the Sea of Galilee. And what happens? The storm hits. A mighty storm hits, and the disciples are struggling to get to the shore. Then, out of nowhere, they see something, or rather someone, walking towards them. At first, they thought "Who it is?" and think it's a ghost. But then a voice calls to them, "It is I. Don't be afraid." It's Jesus, and he's walking on the waves. The disciples are stunned, and as soon as they welcome him in, they somehow immediately reach the shore.

Through these stories, Jesus is displaying himself to be more than just a mere human or a good religious leader. He is something more, and these two stories set the stage for today's teaching.

The next day, the people chase after Jesus. They're looking for Jesus. They want to see more miracles. They want to have more free food, right? They're all over him. But instead of giving them another meal, Jesus starts teaching them about a different kind of sustenance. He teaches them about the bread of life. Look with me in verse 27, he says, **"Don't work for the food that perishes, but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. Because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him."**

In this passage, Jesus is about to shift these people's entire perspective. People are here wanting physical bread, but Jesus tells them that what they really need is something far greater and something far better—the bread that gives them eternal life. And that brings me to my first point:

Earthly Bread versus Heavenly Bread.

So let me ask you a question. What does Jesus mean by food that perishes? In verse 27, it says, **"Don't work for the food that perishes."** What is this pointing to? Is he just talking about physical bread? Is he just talking about a loaf of bread? No. He's talking about everything that people work hard to chase after in this world, hoping that it will satisfy their heart's belly.

Think about the things that you work hard to achieve. As I mentioned in the beginning, some people work hard for the approval of others, right? We shape our lives around what people think of us from childhood. We learn that certain behaviors bring praise, like when we obey our parents, get good grades, or impress others with our abilities. And as we grow, for some of you, those desires intensify. We carefully curate our image. We post the best pictures on social media, filter words to avoid confrontation and criticism, or say things that we know we don't really mean but know that people will like us for. We chase after compliments, followers, approval of bosses, friends, even strangers. Why? Because it makes us feel good, right?

For some of you, you work hard to be wealthy. We grind for financial security, believing that if we just make a little more money, we will finally feel secure. We take on extra hours, side jobs, or even work hard at a job that we don't really love because we want that sense of stability. And that itself is not necessarily wrong, but sometimes it comes at the cost of your marriage, your children, and even your health. We believe that the sacrifice is necessary to be wealthy. And even when we reach our financial goals, we immediately set new ones. This cycle never ends.

For some of you, you work hard for this vague idea of success. We push ourselves to be the best, whether in school or careers, even ministry, right? We measure our worth by our achievements, promotions, and recognition. And when we fall behind, we feel anxious. When someone better than you comes in and surpasses you, you feel threatened. Success becomes a never-ending race where the finish line keeps moving.

Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about, right? But here's the problem with this. No matter how much we gain, it never lasts. Approval fades, money is unstable, and success is temporary. And what's worse, we can never stop working for them. If we're dependent on people's approval, we cannot stop impressing people because we fear that losing their approval means losing our identity. If we stop making money, we worry about our security. If we stop striving for success, we fear that we will become irrelevant.

And this is the exhausting reality of earthly bread that Jesus is talking about. We work for it, sweat for it, sacrifice for it, yet it never truly satisfies us and it never lasts. Our souls get hungry again. That's why Jesus, in this passage, is challenging our priorities. He's asking, "Do you really think these things are worth it?" Because if we're honest, if I'm honest, deep down, our hearts are still hungry. And that's exactly why Jesus offers us something better, something that does not perish.

That's Heavenly Bread.

Jesus, in this passage, is calling us to seek the bread that never perishes—the eternal life that only he can offer. And what is this bread that he's offering? Look with me in verse 35. **He says, "I am the bread of life." I'm the bread of life**, and this leads me to my second point: Jesus is the bread of life.

This passage, "I am the bread of life," is the first of seven "I AM" statements in the Gospel of John where Jesus directly reveals who he is. And why do you think this statement is significant? Why is the "I am" statement significant? Each time Jesus says "I am," he's using divine language. He's echoing God's very name in Exodus 3:14 where he said to Moses, "I am who I am." So people instantly knew that Jesus is making a bold claim. He's basically saying, "I am God." And here, he declares, "I am the bread of life." He doesn't say, "I have the bread of life," or "I give the bread of life." He says, "I am the bread of life." He's saying, "I am the source of this eternal life." And this is crucial.

Jesus is not offering just another temporary solution. He is not giving us something perishable. Instead, he is offering himself. The eternal God is offering himself to you. He makes a powerful promise in verse 35, **"No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again."** What does he mean by this? Again, this is not talking about physical hunger or thirst. He's talking about our souls, our heart. The hunger that we feel for meaning, purpose, love, and life can only be satisfied in him. All the things we work hard for—approval, wealth, success—none of these things will last. And your work will ultimately disappoint you and be in vain. But Jesus tells us that the life he gives, the salvation he offers, is not about our efforts. Verse 38 says, **"For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me."** Jesus did not come demanding that we work hard to earn his love.

That's what a lot of religions do. Do this and do that and then God will approve you. No, He came to do the work for us. Verse 40: **"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who**

sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

This verse 40 is the heart of the gospel. God sent Jesus because He loved us so much that He offered His life for us, and those who believe in Him will be raised up on the last day. Earthly bread will perish. It's fleeting. You can lose it, and ultimately none of it you can take with you when you die. That's the reality. But the life that Jesus offers is not like that. It doesn't depend on your performance. It's not something you have to work to keep, and it doesn't fade. It doesn't spoil. It doesn't perish. It's eternal, and that means it's unchanging, it's unshakable, and it's secure. Jesus says in John 17:3, **"This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ."**

Life is not just about living forever. It's about knowing God. It's knowing the almighty creator of this universe. It is about being brought into a relationship with Him that starts now and lasts for all eternity. This means that if you know Him, you are fully loved and you are fully known. Many of us are working so hard for all these things, but yet deep down we feel like nobody understands us, knows us. If they know the real me, they'll be disappointed. But in Christ, you are fully loved, fully known, and you have a security that nothing in this world can take away from you. You are no longer defined by your sin, by your weakness, but by who you are in Christ. Paul writes in Romans 8:38-39, **"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** This is the eternal life that Jesus is talking about—life that is secure, life that satisfies, and life that starts now and never ends.

So the question is, **what should we then do with this bread of life?** What should we do? Jesus says in verse 51, **"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."** So, up until this point in the narrative, Jesus was merely explaining, explaining, explaining. He was contrasting physical bread and spiritual bread. And now He gives a direct command. And what is this command?

Eat this bread. Eat this bread. This is not Jesus asking you, "Would you like this bread?" This is a command. He's like, "Eat this bread." Imagine walking into a bakery, right, and seeing all the freshly baked bread. You see the bread and you're like, "It looks so good." You smell it, and you think, "I'm hungry." You hear the crunch of the crust. And then you even go on the Internet and read the reviews on Yelp and Google, and you're like, "Oh, look, 5,000 five-star reviews. This is amazing." If you never actually eat the bread, will it nourish you? **No.** In the same way, hearing about Jesus is not enough. "Oh yeah, yeah, I've heard about Him at church." Admiring Jesus is not enough. "Oh yeah, He's a good teacher. I like His teaching." Knowing theology about Jesus is not enough. You must personally receive Him. And this means coming to church does not automatically mean you are feeding on Christ. Growing up in a Christian home does not mean you have personally eaten the bread of life. Jesus is saying you must take me in. Take me into your life completely. Just as food becomes part of our body when we eat, Jesus must become our source of life through believing and trusting in Him.

At this point, Jesus escalates the tension. He says in verse 53, ***"Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves."*** And at this point, people can no longer handle this, right? They're appalled. For the Jews, this was unthinkable and offensive because the Old Testament law forbids the consumption of blood. Leviticus 17 says, ***"I will set my face against anyone who eats blood."*** Deuteronomy 12 says, ***"Do not consume the blood, for the blood is life."***

But more than that, the blood symbolizes violent death. Throughout the Old Testament, **blood was associated with sacrifice.** Sacrificial blood was poured out for people's atonement, and the **Passover lamb's blood was put on the doorpost.** When Jesus said, **"Drink my blood,"** He was pointing to His own violent sacrificial death. People didn't like that. Do you remember the people who were fed by Jesus wanted a king who would conquer Rome? They wanted a miracle-working political leader. But here, instead, Jesus is painting Himself to be a Messiah who will die. This was not the Messiah they hoped for or expected. Obviously, Jesus was not speaking literally when He said, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood." He wasn't proposing cannibalism. But this is a metaphor to describe faith. Jesus is saying eating my flesh means believing in my life and my teaching. Drinking my blood means receiving my sacrificial death on the cross.

To eat Jesus' flesh and drink His blood means declaring that, "Lord, I believe that Your perfect life, Your teaching, and Your atoning death on the cross are my source of life." Just as food must be digested to give strength, faith must be internalized to bring eternal life. And what does this remind you of? To eat the bread and drink the blood—Communion, right?

So, while John 6 is not directly about Communion, it does help us understand its significance because Jesus' flesh was given on the cross for our sins and Jesus' blood was poured out as our final sacrifice. ***And when we take the Lord's Supper, we proclaim this reality: for as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*** Again, it's not the work that saves us. Communion is a reminder of our faith in Christ's sacrifice. But the real eating and drinking is about faith, about trusting in Jesus fully.

Upon hearing this, ***the crowd, the people, were deeply disturbed. They voiced, "This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?"*** The Greek word "hard" does not mean difficult to understand, but rather harsh or offensive. Right?

Jesus' words offended them. They weren't confused people; they were mad people. "My flesh, drink my blood." What kind of teaching is this? But think here with me for a second. Why could these people not figure out that this is a metaphor and not a literal statement, right? Like, if you're smart enough, right, they could have known, right? Obviously, He's not talking about.... He's not gonna, like, rip His... Then why? Why didn't they understand this?

Well, it's not that they were not smart. They simply refused to look beyond the metaphor because Jesus' message clashed with their expectations. They wanted a savior who would help them get what they want, not someone who caused them to surrender their life. But isn't this what many people do with Jesus today? Many people want a Jesus who fits their lifestyle, not a Jesus who calls for total surrender. Someone like Jesus who only blesses them but never confronts their sin. Someone like Jesus who helps them succeed in life but not a Jesus who asks them to take up their cross. Someone like Jesus who affirms all their desires, but not Jesus who says, "Repent and believe in Me." Like the crowd, many today dismiss Jesus because His words offend their worldview.

Jesus tells us that we cannot save ourselves, that we are sinners. And this offends their pride. Jesus says that He is the only way to God and this offends this whole idea of inclusivity. Jesus says we must die to ourselves to truly live, and this offends our love for comfort and control. Just as the people in John 6 walked away because they couldn't accept His words, many today reject Christ for the same reason.

My question to you today is, **does the Jesus you believe in make you uncomfortable at times?** Does He make you think twice about the decisions you make about money, about family, about faith? Or is He always smiling at you and fully supporting you in all your decisions? If so, maybe the Jesus you believe in is not the Jesus of the Bible. Jesus never softened His message to make it more palatable for people. He didn't say, "Wait, wait, wait. Let me rephrase so it's easier for you to accept." He doesn't say that.

Verse 66 says, ***"From that moment many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him."*** Just think for a second, these are the same people who were trying to make Him king and were willing to declare war on Rome for Him. These are the same people who were saying, "You could be our Messiah." But these people, after hearing Jesus' harsh or uncomfortable teaching, walked away.

Faith that is only built on our selfish desire of wanting to use God to get what we want is fragile. Because once that God doesn't give us what we want, we're going to seek after different things. Jesus knew that, and He lets them walk away. He does the same today. So now Jesus turns to His twelve disciples, and He says in verse 67, ***"Do you also want to go away?"*** Just imagine this tense scene, Jesus looking into your eyes and asking you this question, "Do you also want to go away?" And Peter responded with one of the greatest confessions of faith. He says, ***"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."***

Peter, although not perfect, understood something life-changing. He understood that there is no alternative to Jesus, that no one else can offer eternal life, and no one else can satisfy the soul like He does. So this is the question we all must answer: **Will you walk away or will you trust Him?** Will you keep seeking temporary satisfaction in this world, or will you believe and surrender fully to Christ? There is no middle ground on this. Jesus is the bread

of life. He's not just offering a temporary fix. He's not offering a list of rules. He is offering Himself to us.

So ask yourself this question: **What are you feeding your soul with?** Do you feel weary? Do you feel an emptiness in your soul that nothing in this world can satisfy? Jesus is inviting you to come to eat. Verse 35 says, "**Whoever comes to Me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.**" Just as physical bread nourishes our body, Jesus nourishes our soul. Just as food strengthens and sustains, Jesus gives life that never fades. And just as a meal is meant to be enjoyed, a life with Christ is one of deep joy and lasting fulfillment. For many of you who have walked this walk of faith, you know this. So come and be filled. Come and rest in the One who satisfies. Come and know the love of the Savior who gave everything so that you may live. **Because when you have Jesus, you will never hunger again.**

I want to end this message with this song: "Taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him." Let's pray.

Father, many of us today may be feeling empty and desperate to find meaning. Lord, I pray that we come to a realization that the earthly bread this world offers will never satisfy our soul. Jesus, help us to see that You are the bread of life. You are the source of life. And that those who know You will never hunger, never thirst again. Help us to encourage each other with these words. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

- Nothing But the Blood

May the words of Jesus ring true in our lives today. Come and be filled. Come to Me, all those who are seeking for the bread of life. Lord, I pray that our hungry souls will find their true fulfillment in You. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

You are dismissed.