

**Sunday 26th August 2018 Choose today who you will serve!**  
**Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18 Ephesians 6:10-20 John 6:56-69**

**Introduction:**

Important passage

Whole = 47 verses 6:22-69

5 weeks of set readings on 1 chapter! 4 weeks on just these 47 verses and... some verses repeated on 2 consecutive weeks!

7 x 'I am' statements in the gospel of John (I am the light of the world, I am the way, the truth and the life...) but none get as much coverage as 'I am the bread of life'

The other 2 top contenders are

I am the vine 17 verses

Gate + Shepherd 21 verses

Thinking about the whole passage today and what message is being taught that is so important

Sit up and take note!

**What teaching of Jesus is John emphasising in these 47 verses?**

The chapter starts off with Jesus performing a huge miracle to feed 5000 men, plus women and children probably, from 5 small loaves of bread and 2 small fish. Physical bread and an enormous crowd are at the start of the chapter. Just 12 people and an incredible declaration of faith are there at the end of it.

The day after the huge crowd had been fed with bread, they went in search of Jesus once more but He wasn't flattered by their following or fooled by their presence. He cut straight to the chase and challenged their following of Him. He knew they were only after what they could get... more bread to eat... and He challenged them to seek after food that would endure to eternal life not food that would spoil. (vs 26&27)

They asked what they should do to do the works that God requires and He said 'believe in the one that God sent' (vs 29) They kept going, asking for proof / evidence, wanting Jesus to provide more bread! For them it is all about the bread, '(bout de bread, no trouble, all 'bout de bread!!! :-). They'll believe if they get more bread. And Jesus replies that true, life giving bread comes from heaven. He's warning them... don't waste all your time on other food that may sustain you for just a while. Believe in me, the one whom God sent and I will sustain you into eternity.

They wanted the bread "Sir, give us the bread always" they responded (vs34)

At this point Jesus says "I am the bread of life. He whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (vs 35) I won't turn you away, I can give you all you need not just for this life but in life eternal, I will even raise you up on the last day!

And the Jews grumbled!!!

It wasn't what they wanted to hear. It wasn't as simple as doing x y or z

And, added to that, Jesus was claiming God as His father!

So Jesus tries again, this time with maybe a little bit of frustration and says 'Very truly, I tell you whoever believes in me has eternal life. I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE' 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.' (vs 47,48, 51)

He is stressing again... believe in Him, Believe that He is the Son of God, and feast on Him, take Him in, absorb Him into our lives as if He were bread and be nourished, sustained, by Him.

And then He says something that shocks them to the core...

'Very truly, I tell you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.** Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.'

This was one of the most abhorrent, deplorable things that He could say to them. Any good and faithful Jewish person would know that you cannot possibly eat the meat, the flesh of any animal, until all the blood had been drained from it. Leviticus 17 is very explicit about this.

But it was a metaphor that Jesus was using - The way you eat bread for physical sustenance is the way you should feed on me, Jesus, the Son of Man for spiritual sustenance. Desire Me! Seek after Me! Feast regularly on Me! Because it is not about bread! It is about Me!

Jesus is pressing in. He is relentless and saying tough things to them. Love me more than the gifts I can give you or the miracles I do. Love me and come to me because I am the bread, the source of life and strength.

The crowds argued sharply amongst themselves!!! **This statement was hugely offensive for them. They were struggling.** Jesus did not try to pacify them or make it easier. In fact He then challenges them even more and asks 'well what if you see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? Because it is the spirit that give life, not the body'

Jesus has yet again got to emphasise His point even more and make it even clearer for them. In so doing it causes great offence to many of those who hear. SO much so that many who had come to hear his teaching and been fed by the miraculous multiplication of the bread, those who earlier had wanted to force Him to be king, those who had returned to him seeking more bread, once they heard what Jesus had to say, turned their backs on Him and no longer went about with him. It's easy to follow Jesus when we get what we want but what about when we don't? Do we still follow Him?

Jesus had been clear that the way to do God's will was to **believe in the ONE whom God had sent,** Jesus Christ - the Son of Man. It wasn't about works or deeds but about belief. He stated very clearly that He is the bread of life. Come and feast on Him, eat of Him, **fill your soul with Him** and you will have eternal life because it is the Spirit that gives life not the flesh. It is Jesus who gives life on into eternity, not the physical things that we so often seek after.

Many of His followers took offence, were challenged and got up and left. He did not plead with them to come back. He did not change His truths. He did not succumb to their desire for physical bread but instead, said to the twelve 'Do you also wish to go away?'

Do you also wish to go away?

You see, other than walking away, Peter's response was the only one left.

'Lord, to whom can we go?

YOU have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that YOU are the Holy One of God' (vs 69)

Peter is known for many things... for denying Jesus in His last hour, for walking on water, for being the first to declare Jesus is the Messiah

Not often do we remember Peter for these words... this incredible declaration of faith

**YOU YOU, Jesus, have the words of eternal life. YOU are the Holy one of God.**

Jesus is saying throughout this chapter that HE is the one, He is the way to The Father, He is the means to eternal life. Come, come to me because if you do you will NEVER hunger or thirst. I won't turn you away. Come and feast on me and gain your strength and life from me.  
I am the bread of life! Pause...

Just as talking to the Jewish people about eating flesh and drinking blood was highly offensive, I think that the teaching of this chapter can be highly offensive today.

Jesus was saying that He is THE ONE through whom we can receive the gift of eternal life  
All of chapter 6 of John's gospel is pointing to the cross, the cross on which Jesus died after which He rose again to life in order enable all our sins to be forgiven and to conquer the power of death so that we might receive eternal life. How? By believing in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

I hear often from people inside church and outside of it comments that suggest that all faiths are similar, that it doesn't matter which faith you are because all of them lead to God.

We live in a culture that proclaims inclusivity and baulks against offending anyone. But Jesus offended people... not for the sake of it but because He was speaking truth and it was hard to hear and people were offended. It challenged them to the core.

Jesus proclaims a path to God that demands everything from us. It demands our exclusive love for Him and devotion to Him. His love for us and the world meant that He gave everything for us. His love is better than all the gifts He could possibly give us.

God requires that we believe in THE ONE He has sent to us who is Jesus Christ.

That is the only way to God.

And that is offensive to many in our world and maybe even to some of us. We want it to be OK for all, each can go there own way and find their own route... BUT...

Jesus' way demands loyalty and devotion and exclusivity that is a struggle for many

Exclusivity is offensive to British culture

Other paths may promise great things but they cannot or do not deliver (Baal worship couple of weeks ago)

Jesus is not exclusive in who He loves and accepts... This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world vs 51

vs 40 My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life

He loves us all and longs for all of us to come and feast in Him,

But we have to choose Do you wish also to go away?

Who will you trust? Who will you love? Who will you serve?

There is no middle ground stay and believe or reject and go

Just like Joshua had the message to the tribes of Israel

we have to also choose whether we are willing to put away the gods of our culture or not

Joshua told them choose this day whom you will serve but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15

Will you be like one of the many in the crowd and turn your back

OR will you be like Peter and say

YOU Jesus have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that YOU are the Holy One of God

Shortly we shall be coming to communion... with unity... to be united in Christ

Jesus came and gave his life for the world

His flesh and blood made it possible for us to be forgiven and restored back to God so that we may be raised up to eternal life when that day comes

When we come and receive the elements of bread and wine we come, acknowledging & remembering what Jesus did on the cross for us, seeking Him and not what he can do or give to us, and surrendering ourselves as we trust in Him alone.... not other gods and feast on Him the bread of life...

This teaching of Jesus was important enough to John to extend it over 47 verses. It was important enough to those scholars who put the church lectionary together to include it over 4 consecutive weeks. It was crucial to Jesus, because it makes the difference between life and death to us.

Do you also wish to go?

We all have a choice to make.

Choose you this day whom you will serve...

Who? or what will it be...?

Let us pray.