

The Gospel of John - #25 - 03/28/2021 - "Wonder-ful!" John 6: 41-59

Introduction: IL- Several years ago a reader of The British Weekly wrote a letter to the editor as follows: "Dear Sir! I notice that ministers seem to set a great deal of importance on their sermons and spend a great deal of time in preparing them. I have been attending services quite regularly for the past thirty years and during that time, if I estimate correctly, I have listened to no less than 3000 sermons. But, to my consternation, I discover I cannot remember a single one of them. I wonder if a minister's time might be more profitably spent on something else? Sincerely... The letter kicked up quite an editorial storm of angry responses for weeks. The pros and cons of sermons were tossed back and forth until, finally, one letter ended the debate. This letter said, "My Dear Sir: I have been married for thirty years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals - mostly of my wife's cooking. Suddenly I have discovered that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I received nourishment from every one of them. I have the distinct impression that without them I would have starved to death long ago." Sincerely...

Rather than remembering my sermon on this Palm Sunday, I would love to have you go over this text more than once with the approach of this message in mind! I want you to dig out with me some key words and phrases about our Savior, the Lord Jesus, about the eternal life He offers the world through His flesh and blood that He willingly gave on Calvary's cross, and to take it all seriously because the Apostle John who penned this account was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write about this encounter in the synagogue in Capernaum. Walk with me through this passage, then leave today reflecting on Jesus as the Bread of Life whose blood was shed for you, who is worthy of our praise!

Pitiful arguments- John uses the term, "the Jews" not to refer to the whole nation of Israelites, but rather to the leaders of the people- the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Sanhedrin and Levitical priests who clearly had issues with Jesus on several levels. I believe that, on that day, there were both Israelites and Samaritans in that crowd that gathered around the synagogue. They had already heard Jesus say, in verses 33 and 35, that He was the Bread that came from Heaven and those leaders struggled with that description. Please know that there were some, though few by comparison, who "got it" about Jesus and put their trust in Him as the Son of God. His disciples were part of that group but others, over the previous 33 years since Jesus was born, came to realize He was the fulfillment of God's promise to send the Savior. I thought back to when Jesus was eight days old and Joseph and Mary took Him to the Temple to dedicate Him to the Father, and in the Temple that day were two elderly servants of God, Simeon and Anna, who, according to Luke 2, "got it" and were so thankful for the wonderful privilege of seeing and holding the Baby Jesus who would later announce Himself as the Bread from Heaven! Those two, and others like them, were not grumbling and disputing, they were praising and rejoicing! What exactly the Jewish leaders were arguing about is summarized in their question in verse 42- "How does He now say, 'I have come down from Heaven'?" That question prompted me to propose some other questions that may have lurked in their minds. Of course there is the question they disputed among themselves in verse 52, "How can this man give us his flesh to

eat?" But in between and in the back of their minds they may have murmured about: Why does he have to do all of this in our synagogue? Where is he going with all this religious nonsense? Who does he think he is? What will he say he can do for us as leaders of his people here in our courts? They didn't say, "Who are you- we'd really like to know!?" They could have asked, What did you come to accomplish and when will it be obvious to us? They should have said, with meaning, "Tell us more!" But they didn't. Five times in this context Jesus claimed to have come down from Heaven, which should have powerfully handled the issue of His deity, but they had hard hearts and that theological truth went right over their heads and by-passed their hearts! Why did they reject Jesus? Because they were operating with only human values and standards. Those standards framed their faulty arguments. They were clearly not listening with the goal of learning but instead with the purpose to criticize and show their strong resentment to Him. Most dramatically, because they weren't listening to learn, they skipped right over the issue of prayer to the Father for wisdom. That wasn't on their "to do" list but should have been at the top! Jesus confronted their attitude both times they spoke up. "Do not grumble" He said, and the second time when they disputed His claims He responded with "Truly, truly" using that powerful word twice in succession for emphasis, adding, "I say to you!" **IL-** Many people today are like those religious leaders in that they hide behind a smokescreen of insignificant arguments to avoid the real issue of their need of a Savior from sin. They claim that the Bible is full of errors and contradictions, that the Bible promotes racism and rejects the feminist movement. They ask questions that have already been answered with Scripture, like "Why is their suffering and death around the world- if God is so loving and kind?" But as you look over today's text please note that Jesus is not shocked by their arguments or their grumbling or disputing. Some people in that crowd, perhaps many, had been fed by His hand in the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 and they witnessed His healing power. But their hearts were hard and only Jesus could give them the answers they needed to hear and process...

Powerful answers- What Jesus reveals in His powerful answers is worth taking a close look at this morning. He is revealing His Father's divine purpose in sending His Son. He is making it clear that the provision of spiritual bread is the Father's doing and the Son's willing participation. He is making it plain that He existed long before He was born of the Virgin Mary. Joseph was his earthly father and caretaker, but His true Father is God in Heaven, where He came from! Jesus was taught the work of a carpenter by Joseph, but He didn't need instruction on how to be the Source of spiritual food and drink through what He would accomplish on the cross and through His resurrection. They needed to look carefully at the evidence He presents of being that Bread that came down from Heaven to feed to souls of men and women, boys and girls who would set aside any skepticism or pride in their intellect, accept His words by faith and accept the teaching of the Old Testament prophets, like Isaiah. In Isaiah 7: 14 the prophet foretold that "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and He shall be called Immanuel." (God with us!) So even here on Palm Sunday we are connected to Christmas prophecies and we can know, excitedly, that God is with us- even in us if we have received His free gift of salvation! When Jesus speaks here of eating His flesh and drinking His blood He is, most certainly, not being literal but is using an analogy- physical things to illustrate spiritual truths. We will look further at some analogies in

this passage in a moment but "the flesh" speaks of His body that would later be nailed to a Roman cross. And "drinking" His blood refers to the spiritual benefit of the blood of the Lamb of God that takes away our sin if we accept that truth. We don't need further enlightenment- we need to appropriate that bread and that blood. In Exodus 12 as the people of Israel prepared to leave Egypt, God told the people that He would "pass-over" His people and cause the angel of death to touch the firstborn son of each family in Egypt. But to be passed over by that death angel God's people needed to put a lamb's blood on the doorposts of their house. When the angel saw that blood he would skip that house and spare that family from the sorrow of death. It didn't matter how worthy the people in that house were- none of us is worthy in ourselves- what mattered was that a lamb's blood would be visible on that door casing. We are set free from sin and death through THE Lamb's blood! Jesus quotes an important Old Testament prophecy in response to their grumbling- Isaiah 54: 13- "All your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children!" This speaks of a time yet to be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom, but even now we can pass along to our children and grandchildren the wonderful teaching of salvation by God's grace alone. Anyone of any age who can understand salvation through Christ and Calvary can have that free gift- today, no waiting necessary. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, and that is no metaphor- the word "grace" means "a gift"- paid for by the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Perfect analogies- A metaphor is a way of referring to one thing by mentioning another similar thing. **IL-** Shakespeare- "All the world is a stage..." Feeding on Jesus Christ is the most dominant analogy or metaphor in this section of John 6. Feeding on Him as the Bread of Life means to partake of His merits, His righteousness, His passions, and the many privileges we share as part of the Church- the Body of Christ. We get right with God not by what we do, try to be, feel- but by receiving what Jesus lovingly, graciously provided through His death, burial and resurrection. In our Gospel accounts Jesus presents Himself as the "**I am**"- the God of gods, and Lord of lords, and He uses these analogies- I am the Bread of life, the Good Shepherd, the Vine, the Way, the Truth, the Resurrection and the Life, the Door- "by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved"! Apart from eternal life through Him we are merely existing- no real life evidenced at all in us. But if we partake of that Bread we live, sustained by His grace. The Bible uses many analogies to describe that spiritual food- like Psalm 119: 103- "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" and Jeremiah 15: 16- "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy words were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Thy name, oh Lord God of Hosts!" The analogy of drinking blood can be compared to drinking the water of life, like Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John 4: 14. But think about this with me for a moment: when it comes to eating from that Living Bread- **IL-** just seeing a loaf of bread doesn't satisfy, knowing its ingredients doesn't meet needs, taking pictures of the loaf to post on Facebook won't fill us, telling other people about it won't sustain us and selling it to someone doesn't fill our stomachs! Jesus Himself took on flesh in His incarnation, His becoming man and, as He describes here to these Jewish leaders, He descended from Heaven as God in flesh! John 16: 28- "I came from the Father and have come into the world!" In His prayer in John 17: 5 He says, "Now Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the

world existed." Since our Bible is the unfolding story of Jesus Christ from beginning to end, eating and drinking the Word, the Bible is a wonderful analogy too. 1 Peter 2: 2, 3- "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up in salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good!" Psalm 34: 8- "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" May God give each of us who know Jesus as Savior an appetite for the Word- a hunger that cannot be filled any other way! One other analogy or metaphor in this text is the metaphor of being drawn to faith in Jesus by the Father and given to the Son by the Father. Look at verse 44- "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." Because of our sinful depravity there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. We do not seek after God- HE seeks after us, like seeking Adam and Eve in the Garden after they sinned and hid themselves. God is a pursuing God and a pulling God as He pulls us toward a place of surrender to Him through His Son. **IL-** The doctrine which leaves salvation to the creature, and tells him that it depends upon himself, is the exaltation of the flesh, and a dishonoring of God. But that which puts in God's hand man, fallen man, and tells man that though he has destroyed himself, yet his salvation must be of God, that doctrine humbles man in the very dust, and then he is just in the right place to receive the grace and mercy of God. It is a humbling doctrine. C. H. Spurgeon The Law demonstrates our sinfulness. No one seeks after God- man's fallen and depraved nature has devastated his ability to believe spiritual truth through his own will. From birth, he is spiritually dead—Eph 2:1. As natural men, they cannot accept or understand the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). The god of this world (Satan) has spiritually blinded the minds of the unbelievers—2 Cor 4:4. The whole world lies trapped in the power of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19). But Jesus promises life in His name and through the merit of His work at Calvary. He is a promise-keeper in every sense of the word. He gives assurances, pledges those assurances even to this crowd of grumblers and complainers...

Pledged assurances- In our text Jesus makes many promises and states most of them with the pledge, "I will!" In other verses He makes clear pledges with unalterable statements. Notice verse 56- "whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him." Jesus uses that word "abide" 10 times in John 15 and it is a word-picture or an analogy of branches receiving nourishment from the Vine down to its roots! If Jesus says it, it is a ""done deal"! He said, 'I will come into the world. I will die for the sins of the whole world, I will come back to life from the tomb (and all of that happened just as He said!) and now we can claim His pledge- "I will return and take you to be with Me!" But those promises, thousands of them throughout our Bibles, are only for those who know Jesus as Savior from sin. Not just anyone can lay claim to those assurances unless they first come to Him and tell Him- "I know that I am a sinner. I know that Jesus died to pay for my sins, all of them, and I know He rose again from the dead to prove that everything He said about Himself is true, and that the living Savior offers me the gift of eternal life. I accept that gift today and I believe all your promises to me in your Word!" We need to remember that Jesus' death on the Cross was voluntary and vicarious (He took MY place- I should have been crucified!) Jesus also promises us eternal security. John 10: 28 says- "I give them eternal life and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand!"

Adam and Eve died spiritually when they ate forbidden fruit. We live spiritually and eternally when we take Jesus into our hearts and minds to feed on Him daily by faith! **IL-** D. Martin Lloyd Jones- "A Christian is one whose mouth has been shut!" That is another way of saying that, apart from Christ, we cannot boast of anything we have done that looks spiritual or religious and expect that deed to count for our eternal life in Heaven. That truth leads us to some personal, practical applications from this passage.

Personal applications- First, we may sense a pressing question about now- a question the people of that day should have asked- Why would God want ME? Why would He draw ME to His Son to put my faith in Him? One simple answer from our Bible- "He loves me- what more can I say?!" Without Him drawing me I would never feel the need for a Savior! I need instead to run to Jesus in faith, submit to His gentle, powerful drawing and claim that free gift! If I choose to reject that gift I only prove that I am a stranger to grace. But if I hear His invitation, really hear, if I say, "That makes sense, I admit I need Jesus", then I can experience His love firsthand! I will see myself as one who is called to proclaim the Good News and is committed to living to honor my Savior! Second- don't go a day without feeding on the Written Word of God. But like any other physical food, it is useless until I consume it! I am prompted by hunger and I know, if the food is well-prepared, I am going to be helped nutritionally when I eat it. It does take a measure of trust because I may not know how it was prepared or even who made it. And finally, I can't eat for someone else- eating is very personal- and so is my time in God's Word! Third- there is a beautiful picture here in this subject of eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood. Even though the Lord's Supper, or Communion had not been instituted until that final weekend that we know as Easter, we now share in worship through Communion with the piece of bread we will distribute and eat symbolizing Christ's body, His flesh nailed to the Cross on our behalf. And the cup we drink from when it is shared with everyone, is a symbol, a picture of the blood that flowed from His tattered body as He hung there in your place and mine. [PPT- 1 Corinthians 10]

Communion is a look back at what Jesus willingly, lovingly, graciously did for us- each of us!

Conclusion: **IL-** Cryogenics Institute- preserve a body upon death with liquid nitrogen to help prolong life and bring people back from the dead. "Imagine a world with no disease or death!" God has already promised such a place- it is called Heaven and those who feed on the Living Bread and who draw from the blood Jesus will share that place of eternal joy! **Amen!**

Communion

Closing Song- "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"