

I AM: The Bread of Life Title  
John 6:25 -59

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

<sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

<sup>30</sup> So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’<sup>1</sup>”

<sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup> “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup> But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

<sup>41</sup> At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup> They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”

<sup>43</sup> “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. <sup>44</sup> “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup> No one has seen the Father except the one who is from

God; only he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

<sup>52</sup> Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

<sup>53</sup> Jesus said to them, “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. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” <sup>59</sup> He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Good morning, Church! How are we doing? (J.P. is standing beside a grocery cart filled with packages of bread in many varieties.) Listen, if you are a manager of H-E-B, we’re going to bring it back. Okay? I just want to put that out there! We’re not going to keep it. We’re going to take it back.

This week, my neighbors, I’ve got these awesome neighbors from Louisiana ... They were raised in Louisiana, met in Louisiana, and then moved here and brought a lot of Louisiana with them. I love them! They’re so much fun! They had a family-friendly Mardi Gras party, complete with a parade. I mean, just over-the-top. They had this bounce house that is purple and gold and turquoise. Where do you get a Mardi Gras bounce house in Waco? Is it special order? They have lights at their house; their house is lit up in purple and gold and turquoise. They just go all out. They brought in the food: they had this jambalaya spread, which was amazing, but then they brought in these meat pies, from New Orleans. They had them shipped in with dry ice. So, Monica and I are talking in the kitchen, and I look outside the window, and I say, “Wait, wait! What’s going on?” There’s a parade and float things. Golf carts are driving by. “What’s going on?” And she says, “Oh, yeah! I forgot! Our neighbors are throwing a party.” And I said, “Well, I’ll go and check it out, and see what’s going on.” So, I go over there, and the meat pies, y’all! Meat pies aren’t something I have a lot, so I try one, and then two, and then three. And I say, “Okay, guys, good to see you!” Then I go home, and I’m sitting in my house, and I say, “I’m going to go back and see if there’s any left.” So, I go back, and I do that, true story, three times! They were *that* good!

I don’t know if you realize what Mardi Gras is. It’s actually a Christian holiday. It started as a Christian holiday. *Mardi Gras* is French for *Fat Tuesday*. *Mardi* is Tuesday, *Gras* is fat. Fat Tuesday, right before Ash Wednesday, which is the beginning of Lent. What we learn from history is Christians, before they would start their fast for Lent, would eat all their rich food, all their fatty foods that they had in the pantry. So as not to waste them, they would indulge in what

was in the pantry; then move into the fasting, or the Lenten season, where they would eat primarily fish and more bland foods because they're fasting up to Easter.

We're starting the Lenten Series. We celebrated Ash Wednesday here Wednesday. Hundreds of you came. It was amazing. As we move into that season, we're starting a series called I AM, where we're looking at the seven "I AM" statements of Jesus. Lots of people have opinions on Jesus ... Who He is. What He did. Your atheist friends are going to have opinions. Your professors are going to have opinions. Journalists are going to have opinions. Scientists are going to have opinions. People with naturalistic world views, your Methodists, your Baptists, your Catholics, your Mormons. Anyone. Any demographic. Any age group. They're going to have an opinion. "This is who Jesus was ..." But we get to look at who Jesus said He was, the things that Jesus said about Himself, in this series.

Today, He says, "I AM the bread of life." (J.P. picks up a loaf of bread from the grocery cart.) It's a weird thing to say. If you're going to come up with seven metaphors for yourself, would you choose one of these? (Indicates the loaf) You've got seven metaphors to go with and to teach from and to tell the world who you are (raises the loaf), and this is what you choose? "Hey, man, you know the stuff in the grocery story? The Mrs. Baird's, the loaves, I'm the bread of life." Why would He say that? Why would he choose *this* to be one of them?

He's communicating something really important to us out of the gate. He's the only One who ultimately can sustain us, so He's using something that we do on the daily for survival, which is eat. In this culture, specifically, their meal was almost exclusively bread, or at least, it would show up at every meal they had. He said, "You know, that stuff that you rely on daily? *I'm* the bread of life.

The reason I start talking to you about Mardi Gras, is because what it's evolved into today, in 2023, is this opportunity to indulge, not just in food, but in drink and pleasure of all kinds. I think some of us are going through life like one big Mardi Gras. It's not just a Tuesday, 24 hours that we have to cram in as much pleasure as we can, but it's 76 years, or whatever we have under the sun. Everywhere we go, we're just looking for the next great meal, the next great time, the next great memory, the next great vacation. What can we fill the void in our heart with? What can we experience? Where can we go and what can we do? It's like one big Mardi Gras, before we go into this "forever fast" if you will.

The seven "I AM" statements are more than meets the eye. Even just these two words they all begin with: I AM. This is a throwback to what God says about Himself in Exodus. "I AM, the very I AM." "Who are you? What can we call you?" "Your words, your dictionary, the letters that you piece together, the noises that you make with syllables ... they can't contain Me. I'm *more* than that. Sovereign. Omnipotent. Omniscient. I'm bigger than what you could describe with the name of Yahweh. I AM." So, Jesus, claiming to be God, pulls this name from the Old Testament, Exodus, Chapter 3, Verse 14. He pieces it to, seven metaphors to give you a better understanding of who He is. This is important because you and I are Christians. *Christ*-ians. C-h-r-i-s-t-i-a-n-s, meaning "little Christ" or "little Jesus's" or "Jesus followers." Which means at a fundamental level of our faith, it's not things you learned, or denominational additions. At the fundamental foundation of who you are and what you believe, you're following Jesus, which means you're looking to do what Jesus did. Or to say it a different way, at every turn, in every

place, in every conversation, and relationship, and experience, you're saying, "What would Jesus have *me* do?" Because to follow Him, means to do as He would do, or better said, as He would have *you* do. That's why this series is so important because we're going to learn about our Savior, the One that we say we follow. We're going to learn *from* Him as He's going to teach us about Himself.

One more "Easter Egg," no pun intended; actually, I guess its pun intended. I should say, pun *very* intended. He's born in Bethlehem, *Bet Lehem*, 'House of Bread' is what it translates to. That's where Jesus came from. The House of Bread. And He's saying something to us, even in His birth, where He came from. "I AM the only One who can ultimately sustain you." When Jesus would have said "bread" to this audience, they would have immediately gone back 1,300 years to their ancestors in the wilderness and God providing manna, or bread, for them from Heaven. So, it appears out of nowhere. This is such an important story in the narrative, Genesis to Revelation, God provides food for them to sustain them out of nowhere, from Heaven. So, when He says, "I AM the Bread of Life," they go back and they think about their ancestors immediately. But that's not all. They would also think about what happens here in John, the feeding of the 5,000. They follow Jesus to a place where there is no food and they're hungry, and He provides for them in a really tangible way. He creates food for them. He has their attention. Right now, He's this "magician" if you will, who can give them what their flesh desires. So, they're following Him with a question mark. What happens right after He does that miracle is He's on a little jaunt across the Sea of Galilee and He walks on it! No boat. He walks across the Sea of Galilee, and that's where our story is going to pick up. Here in John, Chapter 6, if you want to turn there. I'm going to give you 34 verses. That's a lot. As we move through this text, we're going to look at how ...

- 1 – Stuff leaves us empty
- 2 – Jesus came here in the flesh
- 3 – We have access, but I'm asking you the question: Do you have appetite? You have access, but do you have appetite?

Verse 25: **"When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"** Two things are happening with this question. One, they don't see a boat.

"Where did you come from?"

"Well, I walked."

"Walked where?"

"On the water"

But there's also this other thing happening where you see someone, and you want something from them, and you're like, "Hey, buddy. How've you been? What's goin' on? You look good! What are you doing here?" They're kind of getting close to him so they can set him up for a question. "Hey, you're the guy who made the bread out of nowhere. I'm hungry." <sup>26</sup> **Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."** He's saying, "Hey, you don't want Me. You want what you think I can give you. You're still operating in the flesh. You're still hedging your bet. You're still going to church, hoping to get something from God. You're still praying,

hoping that you get a return on that investment. <sup>28</sup> **Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”** Requires for what? They’re still after the prize. They’re like, “Hey, just tell us what to do to get what we want from God. <sup>29</sup> **Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: ...”** “Okay, I’m gonna tell you what to do. I’m gonna tell you what to do. I’m gonna tell you what to do!” **“... to believe in the one he has sent.”** *Believe*, not *behave*. “What do I have to do?” “Believe.” <sup>30</sup> **So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?”** <sup>31</sup> **Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”** Man, these guys are *hungry*! What are you going to do? If you’re a parent, you’ve seen this. My kids will do this to me. My kids will be like,

“Oh hey, Dad, you look good! Workin’ out? Man, got some drip today. Swag. You look good!”

“What do you want?”

“Oh, I was just wondering. I was thinkin’, man, you know, we should get a puppy!”

“No.”

“Well, you know, Jane’s dad bought her a puppy. Our ancestors, let me tell you what sign God did for them. He gave them bread from heaven out of nowhere. You know, Jane’s dad, ...”

“No.”

“Dad, what do I have to do to get a puppy?”

“Here’s what you have to do: You have to believe that I’m better than a puppy, so that you don’t want a puppy. Checkmate.”

That’s kind of what Jesus is doing here. <sup>32</sup> **Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”** <sup>34</sup> **“Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”** “How do we get a puppy?” Back to the bread, though, and it’s just like the woman at the well. She says, “Where do I get this water?” Jesus said, “You don’t understand. I’m not talking about water.” Right here, they’re like, “Where’s the bread vending machine? How do we do this?” He says, “It’s not bread that you need. It’s the One in front of you.”

<sup>35</sup> **Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup> But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.”** And make no mistake about it, this morning what Jesus wants from you is your belief. Faith. Trust in him. He’s after your belief in Him, and I think at times, we just want His stuff. So, my first point is stuff leaves us empty, while the Savior is enough.

1. *Stuff leaves us empty, while the Savior is enough.*

Round One in Waco, when I went to school here, I worked at a wonderful establishment, a fine Italian restaurant known as Johnny Carino’s. Anybody remember Johnny Carino’s? (Hands go up around the room.) Okay. It’s a great restaurant. I loved it. I loved eating there. I loved working there. At Johnny Carino’s, when you got there, we would serve you a loaf of bread. Everybody remember that? The warm bread. We’d bring out the warm bread and set it on the table. It was in a little bag. (J.P. grabs a loaf of bread from the cart.) Then there would be some

olive oil there, and I'd swirl the olive oil on a little dish and some balsamic vinegar and toasted garlic. You remember this? Some of you are wondering, "Is he gonna do it for everybody?" No, calm down. We'd have the bread in the bread warmer, and we'd set it down. And people were always hesitant, they'd say, "Hey, do you think (it's complimentary) do you think we could get some more?" "Oh, yeah. You can have all the bread you want. No problem." I'd keep bringing them out, setting them on the table. People would have their fill of bread. And it would happen often, I would come out with their food at some point. I'd serve up the food. "You've got the Chicken Scallopini. Chicken Parmigiana, here you go." And I'd set it down, and I'd always hear the same thing, "Oh, man! We filled up on bread! We ate too much bread! I'm not even hungry anymore!" I'd hear the same things, different versions of that expression. "Gosh, we ate too much bread! We ate the wrong thing! We filled up on the wrong thing!" Or, to say it like this, "We had an appetite for the wrong thing."

Here's a commentary on this idea out of Philippians 3, Verse 18. Paul says this: **"<sup>18</sup>For as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, so he's moved to emotion, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, (They eat what they're hungry for. They follow their appetite.) and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things."** "I've had my fill." Or maybe you haven't. You're looking for the things. You're looking for the things to have your fill.

Have you guys ever gone to the grocery store hungry? (J.P. grabs the grocery cart.) Have you ever done this? That's a real thing, man. Monica will send me to the grocery store for Frosted Flakes and 2% milk. But I'm hungry, and I'll go walking through the aisles. I just need to see what's on aisle one. Oh, the Pop Tarts. (He pretends to put a box in the basket.) And these Pop Tarts. Oh, and there's a new flavor! I haven't had these. And then I go and get the cereal, and I know she said this cereal, but we've never had that cereal and that cereal and that cereal. We're just going to try them. (He pretends to grab them all.) See if the kids like them. And you go to the milk and pass the ice cream. Oh, they've got Blue Bell, and you've got to get some because it's exclusive to Texas. Then you go to the checkout, and all of a sudden, you went there for two things, and you've got all of these things because you were there and you were hungry.

I think that's how some of us go through the world. We're hungry, and so we're filling the void. "Oh, I need that house, and this car, and these clothes, and these shoes, and this relationship. I've gotta be liked. I've gotta have this newest invention. Oh, Apple came out with something. I've gotta support that struggling company. Gotta have it." And so, you see the dichotomy of the two things that we can experience. When we go to be with Jesus, to have our fill with Jesus, we sit down with our Bible, and there's the songs or whatever it is. "But, I'm full, God. I don't have an appetite for this. I don't have the desperation, or the need to feast on this 3,500-year-old poem. I'm not hungry. I'm not hungry." Or, "I'm hungry for something else. This just isn't as interesting as Tik Tok, or Instagram, or the news, or my favorite team that's playing. It's not as interesting as this relationship or this business deal that I'm trying to close that's consuming my mind. This isn't as interesting as that." There's no desperation. Are we hungry? Here's my concern for Baylor, here's my concern for Waco, here's my concern for Harris Creek: Are we hungry? Or are we full of the wrong things? Or have we grown an appetite for the wrong things so that when we sit down at the Word, there's no desperation. There's no need. There's no appetite. Do we believe that nothing in this world will satisfy us? Nothing in this world, meaning

under the sun. Nothing under the sun will satisfy us. For something to satisfy us, it will have to come from beyond the sun here, like something past the sun, something other worldly.

Something supernatural would have to come here to satisfy us. He says, in Verse 37, **“<sup>37</sup>All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.<sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven** (Underline that – ‘come down from heaven’ – you’re going to see that five times) **not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.**

**<sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.”** He says, “I’m on mission here. I came to get God’s children back. I’m here collecting the children of God so I can take them home with me. I came from another kingdom, down to this Earth to gather God’s children and say, ‘Hey, come back with me forever and ever and ever. He’s on mission. **“<sup>40</sup> For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”** Most likely, He’s alluding to Numbers 21 and the bronze serpent, and the Israelites, who get bitten by a venomous serpent, or snake, and they’re dying. And the only way they can live is they make an exact representation of that which is killing them, and they have to look upon it, trust on it, and they’re healed. And that is alluding to Jesus, who is the One to come. And here He says, “Unless they look to me will they be lifted up with me, healed from that which seeks to destroy them.”

**“<sup>41</sup> At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup> They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”** Which is a claim to deity, by the way. **“<sup>43</sup> “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. <sup>44</sup> “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup> No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die”** Listen to this, no one is too far. No one is too far. The person, today, that you think is too far, today can eat from the bread of life and be saved. Today. God could do that today. He could do that right now. **“<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”** Jesus came here, He was sent here by God the Father on mission to get His children back. John 3:16 **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever *behaves* (J.P. pauses) that whoever *behaves*(?) (pauses again) that whoever *believes* in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** God is after your heart. He came here, from there, for your heart, for your belief, for your trust in Him. Not just a knowledge of, an awareness of, a mental ascent, but “I’ve placed my life in your care.” Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. He came from there to here. That’s my second point. Jesus came here in the flesh to take us home forever.

## *2. Jesus came here in the flesh to take us home forever.*

He came here and he put on flesh. He’s eternal God, fully God, fully man. Hypostatic union. An eternal God, who wrapped himself in human flesh to be the exact representation of a human, to

die a death, but be an eternal being to overcome death, giving us the hope of life beyond death, and you cannot live without Him. Of course, I'm going to say that. I'm a pastor, preacher, teacher of the Bible. You can't live without Him. Let's logically inspect that, see if that's true. Let's talk about it. Now let me ask some questions.

Can you live without food? (Someone in the audience says something.) What did you say? (Person repeats answer) He said, "Yes, for a period of time." Sure, I'm living without food right now. I'm alive (J.P. waves his arms), but I'm not eating. At some point, I'll be on the decline. My body will long for food. I'll need to eat food. At first it will be uncomfortable; it might make me grumpy. At some point, my faculties begin to fail, my organs begin to turn on each other, and then at some point, I'm on the decline, and at some point, I'm dead because I didn't have food. There's a progression there, but right now, no food and I'm alive. I'm living without food.

Can you live without oxygen? You actually can ... for a little bit. (J.P. holds his breath and waves his hands, then exhales.) Living without oxygen, right? Similar thing, shorter period of time. I can go without it. I can be fine, but at some point, it's uncomfortable, and then at some point you panic. You need to breathe! You need oxygen! And at some point, your lungs fill with fluid and your heart stops.

Can you go without Jesus? (Silence from the audience, so J.P. whispers.) It's the same answer ... for a period of time. Here's the difference: in both of those examples, there's a moment where you go from thriving to declining to withering to death. It's like you're going to see me for a minute and I'm fine, and then I'm not fine, and then I'm failing, and then I've failed. Without Jesus, from moment one, you're on the decline. You are *not* experiencing life as it was intended to be experienced. You, and it's easy to overlook because we see the world through the lens of our existence on Earth, and we think it's a long time. It's a really short period of time. A really short period of time. (J.P. snaps his fingers.) Without the supernatural eternal oxygen that we need called Jesus Christ, from the moment we don't have him we are suffocating. We are on the decline. We are dying. So, you will live for a little while, but then you will die in the most unthinkable way. The only way, the point Jesus is making, the only way we can live forever is to consume the Bread of Life, to feast on the Bread of Life, to enjoy, to believe upon the Bread of Life. To trust in the Bread of Life. There is no other way.

Verse 52: **"<sup>52</sup> Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'"** It went to a weird place ... cannibalism. And it is weird. The criticism of the Roman Empire of the first century Church, known as The Way, they weren't known as the Christian Church, they were just known as The Way, the persecution that they endured was predominantly because of the idea that the common belief was that they were cannibals. That they would eat each other. That they would eat human flesh and drink human blood. This is what was believed to be true about Christians. You say, "Well, wait, why?" This is why Romans felt justified burning them alive and using them as torches to light their gardens or to light a path that you would walk on, as an example to show others, "Do not go The Way that they're going." Why would they think that? Listen. **"<sup>53</sup> Jesus said to them, '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. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my**

**blood remains in me, and I in them.** <sup>57</sup> **Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.** <sup>58</sup> **This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died,** (This is the second time he said that.) **but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”** <sup>59</sup> **He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.”** Now, you can imagine, if that is being read to you in the gathering and there’s some Roman soldier listening over the fence, that they’re like, “Man, these guys are crazy! Vampires! I’m out on that!” So, we have to make sense of that. He’s saying plainly, “Hey, there is food here that will only sustain you here, but there is food here that will sustain you there and forevermore.”

What does it mean to consume Christ?

1. It means to set aside time to reflect on who He is and what He’s done for you.
2. A common way that we do that is through the tradition known as Communion.

This is a tradition that the Church has celebrated from the Last Supper forward. It is a distinctive of the Christian church. I grew up in a tradition, I might say a denomination, where we believed in a doctrine called transubstantiation. What that doctrine teaches is that the Host, or the Eucharist, becomes the literal body of Jesus, and the wine becomes the literal blood of Jesus; so that when you go to take Communion, you are actually eating Jesus’s literal flesh, and it’s a supernatural miracle that’s occurring. I was an altar boy, and I would sit there so that when the priest would hold up the host, I would ring the bell to symbolize to the church that the supernatural thing is happening right now. It’s interesting, because the priest could not throw the extra wine in the drain into the septic system or the sewage. It would either have to be consumed or it would have to go into a special drain that is built in the back of churches that has a pipe that goes deep into the earth, because this is the belief. This is the theology that I grew up in.

I will tell you that if you have a strong opinion around Communion, it most likely comes from the tradition you were raised in. I’ve had this conversation countless times, and you answer questions like,

1. How often should we do it?
2. Where should we do it?
3. Does everyone need to take it together?
4. What does taking it look like?
5. Should it be administered, given to?
6. Can I go get it?
7. Does it need to be passed around?

Most of the time, almost always, it is someone comparing the status quo to the tradition that they grew up in, saying, “I believe this is right and this is wrong.” When in reality, the Scriptures give us a lot of freedom around Communion. The most important “rule” in taking Communion, is that you reflect on who Jesus is and what He’s done for you. So, you can do all of these things right, and still get it very wrong. Just to take it, but not create time and space to reflect on who Jesus is and what He’s done for you, or time and space to even examine your own heart, that’s the wrong way to take Communion, when there’s a lot of right ways, lots of different right ways. But it’s there, so that we remember who He is and what He’s done for us.

My third and final point is we have access, we need only appetite.

3. *We have access, we need only appetite.*

So, what does it mean to consume Christ? Is it Bible study, is it quiet time, is it prayer? It's you setting aside time to prioritize your relationship with Him, so that your affections for Him may be stirred. Like Communion, there are a lot of ways you can do that. There's a lot of freedom, even more so than Communion. There are going to be people here, there are a lot of academics because of Baylor, higher education, the way you study the Scriptures can be very different than others. You have the Bible, and your commentary, your interlinear, your concordance, your Greek and Hebrew. You're diving in; you're circling a word. You're studying the etymology of that word. Where does it come from, what does it mean? You spent 30 minutes on a word, and God can be honored by that. It's beautiful. It's not the way I do it, because that feels like preparation for work to me. I do that, but it's different context. So, when I'm looking to stir my affections for Jesus, I draw. Psalm 23: **"The Lord is my Shepherd ..."** I'll draw a shepherd. **"... I shall not want ..."** There's a field. I'm the sheep, there's a staff. **"... still waters ..."** I draw that. My affections are stirred. You have a lot of freedom in how you do it. You've just got to do it. You've got to figure out how you do it. It's not dissimilar to stirring affections in a marriage. Some of you have a standing date night ~ Wednesday ~ Date Night. You're not going to miss it; you've never missed it. It doesn't even count if it's not a nice meal. You're going somewhere nice; it's got to have a white tablecloth. And that's how you remind each other that you love each other. Others of you, it's game night. Others of you, date night's at home on the living room floor, after the kids are down, you're in that season of life. Others of you, there's two Type A people, you found each other, and date night is you've got the calendars opened, and you're like, (J.P. mimics frantically writing) "Wednesday, we're gonna do this, this, this, then our To Dos, then over here, and, "Do you have that? Making sure you have what I have." And then you're like (J.P. mimics a hug), "Oh, that was so sweet!" You give each other a hug, go make love, and you're like, "Man, our hearts are so stirred for each other right now!" That's cool. That's awesome. That's not how I roll. Our calendar time is not my favorite time. Each of you have a way that you pursue one another. You have to figure out how you pursue God, but you can't *not* pursue God. It starts with you setting aside a time to prioritize you pursuing Him, and you won't get away without doing it. You won't have a thriving relationship with Jesus without doing it.

We got a new parrot, a Quaker parrot, named Sweet Pea. We got her as a baby, so we had to hand feed her. At some point, we're learning, we have to transition her to actual bird food, seed, etc. In her cage, we have it everywhere. We have multiple seed food dispensers in her cage so that she'll find them. (J.P. chuckles.) It's a small space. They're all there, and it's overflowing with food, but she doesn't have appetite for that food. So, we're trying to coerce her to eat that food, and my kids ask me, "Dad, what if she doesn't eat that food." I said, "She's gonna have to learn to eat that food or she will die."

Right now, you have access, but I'm not sure you have appetite. It's like, you want bread. (J.P. turns to grocery cart.)

"Oh, you want bread? Here's some bread." (J.P. picks up a loaf and examines it.)

“Yeah, but that’s extra thin white. That’s not my thing.”

“Okay, all right. (Puts loaf back in cart and picks up another.) We’ve got this ~ split top honey wheat.”

“Yeah, that’s not really my thing, either. I don’t want that kind of bread. I really want the old-fashioned kind.”

(J.P. puts loaf back in cart and pick up an unsliced loaf.) “Here you go.”

“No, but I’d like it sliced, you know?”

(J.P. puts loaf in cart and picks up another.) “Here’s some.”

“Yeah, but that’s more round. I like the longer loaf. It’s not the bread; I just don’t have appetite.”

You have more access than any Christian who has ever lived throughout all of history, but do you have appetite? You have to grow an appetite. Do you know what it’s like to grow an appetite?

Does anyone like beer? Scratch that. We’ll go coffee. (J.P. raises his hand.) Anybody like coffee? Raise your hand. Anybody coffee drinkers? (Looks around) Okay, good. Here’s what I know about you. I like coffee. Some of you *love* it, right? Next level. You go to bed excited for the next morning because you’re going to have coffee. There was a day, a first time where you tried it, and no one’s ever tried coffee for the first time and said, “Oh wow! That’s delicious! It tastes like chocolate milk!” No, it tastes like dirt! At some point, you’ve been drinking it, and you’ve acquired a taste for it that you actually look forward to. You know what it’s like to acquire a taste for something. This is not dissimilar, right now, to doing a quiet time. Maybe you’re here, and you’re like, “I’m going to do a quiet time out of *duty*, because I have to.” But there will be a moment, if you do that and you continue in that, where you’re like, “Oh, I can’t live without it. Out of desperation, I need it. I have to stay in it.”

In summary,

1. *Stuff leaves us empty, while the Savior is enough.*
2. *Jesus came here in the flesh to take us home forever.*
3. *We have access, we need only appetite.*

We’re going to take Communion now, if you have the Elements. Before you take Communion, the Scriptures call us to examine ourselves, our lives, our own heart. Matthew 5 says to leave your gift at the altar and run and be reconciled to someone if you’ve hurt them. We’re to prioritize our relationship with one another. Recently, in a message on adultery, I hurt some people. When I was describing an interaction with a woman that I had 18 years ago, I did so in a way that was careless and wrong. I was trying to display my mind 18 years ago, which was an addict in recovery, and absolutely thought those things. But I don’t think it was fruitful to say it in that way. Without that clarity, I’m concerned that it hurt women in making them feel objectified and could give men permission to do so, because I said it from this stage. It was wrong, and I’m sorry. Truly, heartily sorry. Not because it cost me, but because it hurt some of you. I do not like hurting people, so I want to ask your forgiveness. Will you please forgive me for being careless with my words in that message, and specifically, that illustration? Will you forgive me? Thank you. Thank you for that grace. Rather than take Communion right now, we’re

going to sing. That is your time to search your heart and reflect. Is there any offensive way in you? Is there someone that you need to be reconciled to? Something that you need to own? Something that you need to ask for forgiveness for, before we move into taking Communion together?

Father, would you help us do that? As we go to worship you, Lord, would you show us what you have for us, in and through the Bread of Life? Thank you for the grace that you extend to us, the grace that we receive from the Gospel. Thank you for your kindness to us. I pray, in moments, that we would remember who you are, even as we sing it, and all that you've done for us, even as we sing it. Thank you for this place and the way you've shown love to us. In Jesus' name. Amen.