

Food That Endures

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[0 : 0 0] Heavenly Father, this Christmas Eve, we remember that it is you who sent your Son, Jesus Christ, so that he was born, so that he may raise those who are dead to life.

And we now want to hear from your word about what your Son accomplished on our behalf. So please speak to us and by your Spirit, give us understanding and inflame our affections for you.

So that this Christmas, we may truly remember the King that came and witness his glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Please be seated. Please turn with me to John chapter 6, verses 22 to 35.

John chapter 6, verses 22 to 35. You're using your Q Bible, that's in page 891 of your Q Bible. And this passage follows on the heels of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000.

[1 : 3 1] It says 5,000 men, and they customarily counted only the men in large crowds. So it's likely there was probably, counting women and children, 20,000 people or so, that Jesus fed with this miracle, multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish to feed this crowd.

And this was intended to show that Jesus was the new Moses, the Messiah, that was promised by God to come. Just as Moses provided manna, bread from heaven to the Israelites, Jesus was going to provide the new bread of life to give eternal life to people that he came to save.

And so that's this passage follows just after that. Chapter 6, verses 22 to 35. I will read it out loud for us. Follow along with me in your Bibles.

On the next day, the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

[2 : 5 5] When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

For on him God the Father has set his seal. Then they said to him, What must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

So they said to him, Then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

[4 : 12] For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

This is the word of the Lord. Now, many of you, probably all of you are familiar with the Christmas story, and probably also with Aesop's fable about the grasshopper and the ant.

You guys know the fable that grasshopper spends his entire summer singing away his time, while the ant is working hard all over the summer, preparing for the future, the winter that is coming, storing up food.

And when winter finally comes, the grasshopper has no food to eat, so he goes to the ant and asks for some food. And the ant rebukes him for his idleness and says, You should dance the winter away, just as you did the summer.

[5 : 29] And this fable is intended to extol the virtues of industriousness, hard work, and planning for the future. And here in New England, we like to think of ourselves as people who are industrious.

We like to think of ourselves as people who plan for the future. So we work jobs that we like. We work jobs we don't like. We work day in and day out. We provide for ourselves and for our families.

We save for our children's college. We plan for our retirement. Yet even with all of that, we don't plan quite far enough. We plan for this life, but not for the life to come.

So in the scale, the breadth of eternity, then we are just like this grasshopper who is so distracted and busy with the preoccupations of the here and now that we do not attend to the business of eternal life.

And that's what Jesus rebukes this crowd of in verse 25. He says to them, in verse 26, He says, Well, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

[6 : 37] Jesus here accuses his admirers and followers of using him to get what they want but in seeking to get to know him and following him as a son of God and Messiah that he is. And if you've, I mean, and I think all of you at every stage of life have probably experienced this.

As a child, you may remember that some, and if you're still a kid, you might remember that some of your peers, some of your other friends' kids who may not have any, wanted anything to do with you, didn't want to hang out with you, all of a sudden want to be your friend when you have the cool toy or a game that they didn't have, right?

Or if you're a teenager in high school, you might remember that all of a sudden friends who didn't really, the peers that didn't really care for you want to hang out with you when they find out that you got your driver's license and you have a car, right?

Or if you're an adult, you experience all the powerful adults, people with influence have people flocking to them, wanting to score some points and to be under their good graces, flattering them.

That's exactly what these followers are doing to Jesus. They were not interested in getting to know him and following him as who he claimed to be. Rather, they wanted him to be a showman, a magician to fill their stomachs, not a savior to save their souls.

[7 : 56] They wanted to take care of their body, their here and now, and not attend to their souls for eternity. And that's what so many of us do, isn't it? That's what we do often in this life.

We religiously care for our own bodies, right? We, you know, exercise when we don't want to. We eat healthy foods that don't taste good to us, right? We take the vitamins faithfully.

We care for ourselves and buy the organic foods that are the most expensive in the food aisles in the grocery store, all in the hopes that we might be healthy for a little longer, live just a little longer, right?

We religiously tend to our careers. We push aside family and friends to climb relentlessly up the corporate ladder and find greater recognition and esteem and compensation.

We religiously pursue fleeting pleasures for ourselves, feeding our addictions to TV shows, video games, drugs, alcohol, or sex.

[8 : 54] Or maybe we simply religiously pursue the happy middle class life, American life. To have a nice spouse, a nice pair of kids, a nice house, and a nice car, and maybe a nice dog to boot, right?

But the tragedy of life is that all of these pleasures are futile and fleeting. We think that in these things we can find true satisfaction, but we always come up empty.

We never quite have enough, and we always need the next big thing because these things ultimately cannot satisfy our true hunger and thirst. And the reason for that is that our ultimate longing, our true hunger and thirst, is not for these things, but for God, who created us.

As Augustine, a 4th century Christian theologian, says to God, he prays to God, you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you.

A more modern Christian theologian, C.S. Lewis, also writes about this. And then he says in his book, Mere Christianity, creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists.

[10 : 08] A baby feels hunger, well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim, well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire, well, there is such a thing as sex.

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud.

Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. we need to recognize that all the broken, incomplete, fleeting pleasures that we experience in this life are just glimpses of the whole, complete, and enduring perfections of God and the joys that He offers in eternal life.

So you might think, perhaps, of a really mellifluous melody, a music that makes you feel when you listen to it that some things are right in this world. Or maybe you think of the hearty, the blissful, carefree laughter of a baby in your arms.

Or maybe you think of that synergistic blend of savory and sweet in your favorite food. Or maybe you think of that perfect spiral thrown by Tom Brady going into a perfect rainbow arc into that snug hands of that white receiver.

[11 : 44] Maybe you think of the beautiful interplay of colors and lines in your favorite painting. Or that sacrificial and mutually supporting love between a husband and a wife.

All of these things that we long for, that we live for, these are just glimpses. Echoes, shadows of the perfections of eternal life with God.

And perhaps we don't think much about heaven, we don't look forward to these things because we do not realize how good it is. So Jesus enjoins us in verse 27, do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give to you for on Him God the Father has set His seal.

So don't seek the food that perishes but the food that endures to eternal life. These fleeting pleasures that we have are real pleasures but they will not ultimately fulfill us. And the crowd is intrigued by this and so they ask in verse 28, what must we do to be doing the works of God?

This is a subtle but dangerous question that they're asking because Jesus said in verse 27, the Son of Man will give to you the food that endures to eternal life.

[13 : 05] And having heard that, the appropriate response should have been, well then please give us this food that endures to eternal life. But rather than relying on Jesus who promised that He will give this bread, the people are concerned with earning this bread.

So they want to know what works we must do. But Jesus says in verse 29, He corrects them, this is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent.

An eternal life that Christ offers is a gift and not a wage so that the quote unquote work that He demands is to believe in Him whom He has sent. It's like at Christmas time it's particularly appropriate to think about gifts, right?

When you receive a Christmas present you don't expect to receive a bill the following week, right? Saying, well this is how much it costs, you have to pay me back. That's not a gift. That defies the very definition of a gift.

A gift is freely given. Right? In the same way Jesus here says the Son of Man will give to you the food that endures to eternal life. It's free.

[14 : 10] It's free. It's a gift. And that's why He says this is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent.

And faith, believing in Him is not work. Rather it's an admission of our helplessness. In Romans 3.23.25 it says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.

All of us have sinned against God and by refusing to channel all of our thoughts all of our affections and desires all our speech all our words all of our actions by failing to channel all of those things all that we are and all that we do toward God's glory we have sinned against Him because that's what He created us to be that's what He created us to do and as a result we have experienced spiritual death and the only way to regain this life is to have this bread of life but this bread of life is too costly for us to afford it's too difficult for us to procure but Jesus He says He freely offers it gives it to us and all we have to do is in faith simply say yes holding out our empty hands now I don't want you guys to think that faith is an easy thing therefore it's something you can do lightheartedly or halfheartedly because the genuine faith is not just theoretical but it's practical so you might say you believe in modern medicine right but if you don't vaccinate your kids and you when you are diagnosed with cancer instead of going to an oncologist you eat a lot of blueberries then you don't believe in modern medicine you believe it in theory but you don't believe it in practice in the same way if you're to believe in Jesus you say you believe in Jesus but if He doesn't affect your priorities your values your entire life then you don't really believe in Jesus think about it this way 1 John 4 20 this describes

God's people the church as the family of God and it says that if you don't love your Christian brother or sister whom you have seen you can't love God whom you have not seen imagine if you have a family member maybe a sister or brother or father or mother and you don't interact with that person at all throughout the entire year except for a cursory perfunctory call phone call on Christmas day can you really say that you love that family member of course not in the same way then too if you do not interact with your Christian brother or sister at all throughout the year except for a perfunctory visit on Christmas day can you really claim to love your Christian brother or sister and if you don't love your Christian brother or sister according to the Bible it says you do not love God you see faith is far more than just the mental ascent it's not just theoretical it's practice oh yes

I believe in God we say but even the devil believes in God what matters is do we obey him do we follow him do we harness all of our life to live for him so yes eternal life is offered to us freely by Jesus but when we possess it we also become possessed by it it defines our life it drives our life so then the food that endures the eternal life is free and it is given to us by Jesus but what exactly is this food and Jesus gives the answer in response to the people's demand for a sign they ask in verses 30 to 31 then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you what work do you perform our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness as it is written he gave them bread from heaven to eat so they want a sign they want to prove that Jesus indeed can give them this bread of life and then Jesus responds in verses 32 to 33 truly truly I say to you it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven but my father gives you the true bread from heaven for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world and then finally after this back and forth between Jesus and the crowd the crowd finally gives the right response they say okay well then please give us this bread say sir give us this bread always and then Jesus comes back with this mind blowing truth in verse 35

[19 : 09] I am the bread of life whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst before Jesus said that he will give eternal life and now he reveals that he himself is the bread of life he's going to offer himself because he's the one in whom eternal life resides and this is an unmistakable reference to his future impending death on the cross and later in verse 51 he makes this clear he says the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh and you might be wondering well this is Christmas it's about Jesus' birth so why are you talking about Jesus' death well the reason for that is because we have something to celebrate in Christmas but it's not merely that he was the fact that he was born that we celebrate but we celebrate the fact that he was born to die because if he didn't die for our sins then there would be no good news for us to celebrate there would be nothing for us to rejoice in we would all still be spiritually dead and not all that would await us would be God's judgment and eternal perdition but on

Christmas the only God became a man to save us on Christmas the son of God became a son of man God the creator and upholder of the universe took on flesh and was born as a feeble human baby in a manger and what's remarkable is he came not to enjoy the luxurious life of a king making men his creatures do his bidding rather he says in Mark 10 45 he came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many the Anglican minister John Stott summarizes this good news of Jesus Christ this way he says the essence of sin is we human beings substituting ourselves for God while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for us we put ourselves where only God deserves to be God puts himself where only we deserve to be and that's what happened on Christmas day that's what happened on the cross

God the creator became a man the creature because man presumed to be like God by living without any accountability toward him God the holy one died a sinner's death on the cross because man the sinful one rebelled against God and why should we believe that this very tale like story is true because that's the sign that Jesus offered the sign that Jesus offered was in giving offering up himself his own body and then rising again from the dead and I've mentioned this before to our church a couple weeks ago but this is that Christianity is the most falsifiable religion in the world because if you want to start a cult if you want to invent a religion about the worst thing you can say is well I'm going to die and then in three days rise again because you're going to die and then you're not going to rise again and that's obvious to everybody and they could observe that and demonstrate that and prove that they could verify for themselves but that's exactly what Jesus did he told people after in his public ministry that he would die and rise again to prove that he is a son of

God who gives eternal life to us and people believed in him because he did which this is unlike any other religion in the history any other religion you look around Hinduism Buddhism Islam and they all start with this private idea or a private revelation of God that no one else can challenge or verify and that's why they can survive but Christianity is a religion that is patently falsifiable yet it survived because it was true because Jesus did die and he rose again from the dead and his disciples were martyred for their conviction that Jesus was the son of God who rose from the dead and you might object that well sure adherents of other religions and other faiths have also died for their faith and that is true but while people die for what they are convinced is true no one dies for what they know is false and these disciples died proclaiming that

Jesus rose from the dead Jesus offered himself up as the bread of life broken for us so that we might eat and have eternal life but then how do we eat this bread and I've already hinted at this and the answer is in verse 35 Jesus says I am the bread of life whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst here the metaphorical language is revealed because those who no longer hunger are not those who eat Jesus but those who come to Jesus and those who will no longer thirst are not those who drink Jesus but those who believe in him so you eat the bread of life by coming and believing in Jesus so I urge you then this evening don't seek the food that perishes but the food that endures to eternal life and as we think about eternal life I'm going to end with this thought it's from a book called heaven by

[25 : 03] Christian author named Randy Alcorn and he writes this he says the best of life on earth is a glimpse of heaven the worst of life is a glimpse of hell for Christians this present life is the closest they will come to hell for unbelievers it is the closest thing they will come to heaven so I urge you with all my heart this evening anyone listening to this message could come to Jesus and believe in him for that's the reason for Christmas that's the purpose of Christmas he was born to die so we might live so let's pray together Ralph baking me you me