

Gospel of Glory: Bread of Heaven

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, September 29, 2024
PASSAGES	John 6; Exodus 16; Psalm 78; 2 Kings 4; Deuteronomy 18
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:56:32 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

John placed the feeding of the five thousand at the structural center of his Gospel, and the point of it was never the catering. Jesus is the bread that came down from heaven — the same provision God made in the wilderness, now standing in a body you could touch. And the only work God asks of anyone is to believe in the one he sent.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ John's signs are arranged as a sandwich — wine and the cross on the outside, life and death on the next layer, and this feeding in the middle, where the emphasis falls.
- ◆ Every beat of John 6 echoes the wilderness: a mountain, a crowd, Passover, miraculous bread, and the same Greek word for grumbling.
- ◆ Nobody got a symbolic bite. They ate their fill and there was more left over than they started with.
- ◆ Jesus told the crowd to their face why they had come back — not because they saw the sign, but because they ate the loaves — and they immediately asked him for another sign.
- ◆ Eating his flesh, abiding in him, and believing in him are the same thing said three ways. The bread is a metaphor; the person is the substance.
- ◆ Manna never made anyone immortal. Israel ate it and died. There is one way to live forever, and it is Christ himself.
- ◆ Every other religion is a path someone climbs toward God. Christianity is an invitation to a wedding feast, extended to people who could never have bought the ticket.

► 1:18:18

Matt began by noting how rare this story is. Only one other miracle in the Gospels appears in all four accounts alongside it: Jesus multiplies food for thousands of people. It demonstrates provision — but underneath the provision is the question John keeps circling, which is identity.

The sandwich, and the burger in the middle

► 1:19:30

John only calls some of the miracles signs, and Matt laid the list out one more time for anyone who had just joined: water to wine; a dying boy healed; a disabled man at the pool; the bread multiplied; a man born blind; Lazarus raised; and finally the death of Jesus, which counts because he called it early — “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

► 1:21:49

Read as a sandwich, the layers pair off. Wine at a wedding at one end; at the other, a pierced side and the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). A dying child and a dead man, healed and raised. Scholars call the pattern a chiasm. Matt prefers sandwich, because the meat is what matters: the middle story is where the ancient writer put the thing that explains everything else.

A crash course in the wilderness

► 1:23:29

Bread from heaven should remind you of manna, and Matt said the resemblance runs much further than that. Israel is delivered from Egypt through plagues and signs, crosses a sea on foot, and then — having watched all of it — grumbles about the small things. Thirsty first, and water pours out of a rock. Then hungry, pining for the meat pots of Egypt, and God rains bread down from heaven (Exodus 16). *Manna* is a Hebrew shrug — roughly, *seriously, what is that?*

“They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved. They spoke against God, saying, ‘Can God spread a table in the wilderness?... Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?’”

PSALM 78:19–20 ↗

Moses was more than a prophet in that story — a governor, a lawgiver, a covenant mediator, and a priest through his brother. Which is why the promise of another prophet like Moses was never a promise of just another prophet.

Barley loaves, and a prophet with a double portion

► 1:30:22

Jesus goes up a mountain. Passover is at hand. A crowd comes, and he asks Philip where they should buy bread — a question he already knew the answer to. Even here, Matt said, Jesus is taking the disciples to school and training them in faith. Philip's answer sets the tension: two hundred denarii would still leave everyone with a little. Andrew produces a boy with five barley loaves and two fish.

► 1:33:16

The word *barley* is a wink. In 2 Kings 4, Elisha — who walked in a double portion of Elijah's power — feeds a hundred men with twenty barley loaves, and there is food left over. Matt did the arithmetic out loud: Jesus has a quarter of that bread and fifty times the crowd.

“Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.”

JOHN 6:11 ↗

As much as they wanted. No symbolic bites, no everyone-quietly-shares-a-lick scheme — and twelve baskets of fragments afterward, more left over than they had at the start. The crowd draws the right conclusion, that this is the Prophet who is to come into the world, and then the wrong one: if Moses fed them and delivered them from Egypt, this man will feed them and deliver them from Rome. They move to make him king by force. He withdraws.

A man who crossed the sea on foot

► 1:37:13

That night the disciples row into a headwind and see him walking on the water; the moment they take him aboard, the boat is at the shore. The Sea of Galilee is not three or four miles across, so the arrival is its own miracle. But hold the picture, because Matt came back to it at the end: here is a person crossing a sea on foot, and his people arrive because he does.

“You are seeking me because you ate your fill”

► 1:39:04

“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.”

JOHN 6:26–27 ↗

John says at the close of his Gospel that he wrote the signs down so that people would believe. The crowd got the meal and missed the sign. Then, having just been told that, they ask what work God requires — and when Jesus answers “believe in him whom he has sent,” they ask what sign he will perform, and helpfully mention that their fathers ate manna in the wilderness.

► 1:41:52

“It's not a very subtle hint,” Matt said. It is also, he admitted, exactly what he would have said.

I am the bread of life

► 1:42:23

Jesus corrects the attribution first: it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven. It was the Father, and it still is.

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

JOHN 6:35 ↗

The same word: grumbling

► 1:43:30

And then the parallel closes. “So the Jews grumbled about him” — the same word the wilderness stories use over and over. In the desert the grumbling was a fixation on the present problem instead of trust in their shepherd. Standing in front of the shepherd himself, they are still fixated on the literal loaf.

► 1:46:03

Which is where Matt located the argument that settles the chapter:

“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.” Miracle bread did not make anyone immortal. No supplement will either. There is one way to live forever.

A hard saying, and a kindness that hurts feelings

► 1:48:20

“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you...
Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”

JOHN 6:53-56 ↗

Bread is the metaphor — he says so, “I am the living bread” — and eating and drinking are derivative of the metaphor. The substance is the person. Living forever, abiding in him, feeding on him and believing in him are one thing said four ways. Matt was direct about the ordering with the Lord's Supper: communion is about this chapter; this chapter is not about communion.

► 1:50:13

“This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” Many walked away. Matt could not let that pass without a word to our own moment: Jesus was plainly not preaching people-pleasing sermons, and he is by definition love. “His demonstration of kindness includes hurting people's feelings.” We have quietly assumed that hurt feelings prove unkindness. That assumption cannot survive this chapter.

Every religion is a path to God, except one

► 1:54:01

Asked whether all religions are paths to God, Matt's answer was yes — with one exception. Ayahuasca, manifesting, good deeds banked against the universe, a hand held aloft for years until it withers: all of them are attempts to purchase entry to a gift. So is the desperate prayer most of us have prayed. Have you ever been in a from-now-on kind of place? *Lord, if you come through for me, then from now on...*

► 1:55:17

“Christianity is not people trying to get to the Lord,” Matt said. It is an invitation to a wedding feast, handed out from the mature martyr all the way down to “just the scummiest creepy weirdo.” If that sounds scandalous, it is. If it sounds cheap — it was not cheap. It was amply provided for, at no cost to you.

► 1:57:19

All the categories collapse into one man: the God who gathered and fed his people in the wilderness, the prophet like Moses, and the representative who crossed the sea on foot so that his people arrived. “He's God coming to you. We're the ones shutting him out, our fingers in our ears and our eyes closed — and he's breaking into our stupid fortresses.”

► 1:58:02

Drop the burden of finding God and earning his favor. And do not pick it back up later, which is Paul's complaint to the Galatians — having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? It is a work of grace at the start, a work of grace ten years in, and a work of grace forty years in, which is precisely what makes a martyr's willingness so spectacular: they are not earning anything.

If you ran into your own inadequacy this weekend — probably this morning — Matt had one line for you: you never bought that ticket to begin with, and the invitation still stands. The response is not to murmur, and not to earn, but to believe in the one God sent. Peter got there first:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

JOHN 6:66–69 ↗

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [John 2:19](#)
- [Revelation 19:9](#)
- [Exodus 16](#)
- [Psalm 78:19–20](#)
- [Deuteronomy 18:15](#)
- [John 6:5–7](#)
- [2 Kings 4:42–44](#)
- [John 6:11](#)
- [John 6:14](#)
- [John 6:16–21](#)
- [John 6:26–27](#)
- [John 20:31](#)
- [John 6:28–29](#)
- [John 6:32–33](#)
- [John 6:35](#)
- [John 6:41–44](#)
- [John 6:49–51](#)
- [John 6:53–56](#)
- [John 6:60](#)
- [Galatians 3:3](#)
- [John 6:66–69](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. John put this story at the center of his Gospel on purpose. Why do you think the feeding — rather than a healing or a raising — is the one that explains the rest?
2. The crowd wanted the loaf, not the sign. What good thing has God given you that you have started following him for, instead of following him?
3. The wilderness grumbling and the synagogue grumbling are the same word. Where does your grumbling show a fixation on the present problem rather than trust in your shepherd?
4. Matt said Jesus was kind and still hurt people's feelings. Where have you confused being inoffensive with being loving — in either direction?
5. Have you been in a “from now on” place with God, trying to buy something already given? What would resting in his favor change about this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8U93P71a34&t=3392s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.