



Aug. 8, 2021 John 6: 41-51. 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33
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ENTERING THE SCENE:

John 6: 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the **bread of life**. He who comes to me will never go **hungry**, and he who believes in me will never be **thirsty**. 41 At this the Jews began to **grumble** about him because he said, "I am the **bread** that came down from **heaven**." 42 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**'?" 43 Stop **grumbling** among yourselves," Jesus answered. 44

No one can **come to me** unless the **Father** who sent me **draws him**, and I will **raise him up** at the last day. 45 It is written in the **Prophets**: "They

will **all be taught by God**." Everyone who listens to the **Father** and learns from him **comes to me**. 46 No one has seen the **Father** except the one who **is from God**; only he has seen the **Father**. 47 I tell you the **truth**, he who **believes** has **everlasting life**. 48 I am the **bread of life**. 49 Your **forefathers** ate the **manna** in the desert, yet they **died**. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from **heaven**, which a man may eat and not **die**. 51 I am the **living bread** that came down from **heaven**. If anyone eats of this **bread**, he will **live forever**. This **bread** is my **flesh**, which I will give for the **life of the world**."

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

BREAD OF LIFE / LIVING BREAD / MANNA: In the Hebrew Scriptures (O.T.) bread was often a symbol for God's revealed truth. The bread the people knew of only sustained life, Jesus' bread gives life and sustains it as well. *When you receive communion, do you have the sense it as source and sustainer of your life?*

HUNGRY / THIRSTY: These are real human needs and therefore get the attention of the people. *What needs do you have that Jesus might promise would get your attention today?*

FATHER: Jesus always points us to the Father who is the one whose will he is to reveal on earth. *What is revealing about the Father's love in this gospel text?*

GIVES: Jesus constantly acknowledges that all is gift from the Father's love. *Do you think of your very being as a gift of God? Can you accept, like Jesus, the fact that you are is a gift of God?*

COME/S: The Father's love is the drawing energy that initiates your ability to come to that love. *Is there anything that impedes your ability to respond to this love? What 'miracle' do you need to remove that impediment?*

DRIVE AWAY: Jesus promises to never drive away one of God's beloved. Nothing in what he says or does should ever be used to alienate someone from the Father. *Have you ever been 'driven away' by a misuse of Jesus' words? How can you tell when someone is misusing the Word of God?*

HEAVEN: Heaven is the word we use to describe being in the fullness of God's presence.
What is your definition of heaven?

TO DO THE WILL: Jesus' only reason for becoming one of us was to reveal the fullness of God's will for humanity. Without his revelation we might still be groping around always just missing the mark.
How does this text help you to see more clearly God's will for you?

SENT ME: Jesus is very clear about his mission or the reason he was sent. He was sent for each person who was trying to respond to God's love for him or her.
What in your understanding of this teaching helps you to respond to God's love for you?

LOOSE: To loose something or someone, there must be someplace that you can't see or understand.
Have you ever wondered just how it could be that God could 'loose' anything or anyone?

GIVEN: Jesus is constantly aware of being given everything. He is totally conscious of the source of all reality.
How does this enable him to reveal God to you? Could you receive more of God's revelation if you were more conscious of all things including you're very self as gift?

RAISE THEM UP: Since all living things die, the necessity of faith in resurrection is vital for our ability to live in hope that death is not the end.
How does this help you to live in the hope of your resurrection?

EVERYONE: God loves all that God creates.
Who are there people who have been part of your life that are especially close to you? Is there a way that these beloved ones are now incorporated in your very life? Can this insight help to enlarge your understanding of this truth?

LOOKS TO THE SON: To look to the Son, is to look as the Son looks.
What is Jesus seeing as he speaks to you in this gospel text?

BELIEVES IN HIM: To believe in Jesus is to believe as Jesus believes.
What does Jesus believe about personal immortality?

ETERNAL LIFE: Sooner or later, we all come to the realization that without some kind of eternal life, physical life can lose its 'elan vital' or vitality.
Try to imagine how your life would be different if you really believed that this physical life is really all that there is for you.

RAISE: Jesus knows that his resurrected life is not a simple resuscitation. It is much more.
How do you imagine your resurrected life? If a non-believer asked you to explain your hope of resurrection, how would you do it?

LAST DAY: In times of turmoil we find the talk of last days. Many try to scare others into changing because of the fear of being lost.
How does reflection on this gospel text help inoculate you against such tactics? What will enable you to live in confidence in this gospel text?

GRUMBLE / GRUMBLING: The people were eager to know of heaven, but not enthusiastic about how to enter it, if it meant following Jesus' challenging teachings. Other translations use the word "murmur" which evokes Ex. 16:2, 7, 8. Even though 95% of the people were illiterate, they knew their scriptures by heart and now strongly disagree with Jesus' interpretation.
Remember the last time you grumbled. What caused that response? Were you, like those listening to Jesus in this text, reacting to something you didn't want to hear?

IS THIS NOT JESUS / SON OF JOSEPH & MARY: In John's gospel, Jesus was known as the son of Joseph. *When the people wanted to situate the source of their discontent, they immediately resorted to the 'common sense' of Jesus' origins. How does reverting to 'what everybody knows' help you to avoid a new idea?*

KNOW / WILL BE TAUGHT BY GOD / TRUTH: God alone engenders faith; we can only model it for others. *Whose modeling of faith has God used to engender your faith?*

COMES TO ME / DRAWS HIM: The truth of Jesus' teaching about God is not something to be simply contemplated or theorized about, but to be done and practiced in our daily lives. We find here the beginning of what will be known as the Trinity, as the Father draws the son. *You are drawn to Jesus in the gospels. How do you move it from the head to the heart? How is the Trinity involved in the movement?*

HEAVEN / FATHER: When speaking about the transcendent/imminent Other who dwells beyond space and time, the scriptures use the words heaven and father. *How do you integrate the new awareness brought about by the 21st century into these words of heaven and Father?*

RAISE HIM UP / EVERLASTING LIFE / LIVE FOREVER / LIFE OF THE WORLD: Jesus will out-suffer violence and sin. He will lose nothing. *How does the promise of the Resurrection raise you up to new understandings of life beyond space and time? When you last attended a funeral, did you find comfort and hope in this promise?*

PROPHETS / FOREFATHERS / IS FROM GOD: God is always urging us into the risky network of life. This is always the message of those who came before us, that there is always more. *How are you cooperating with God in the risky networks of your life? How does the promise of more impact your daily choices?*

DIED / DIE: In John 6:39, 44, and 54, we find that death is never final. *Have you ever read a book written by those studying life after life? If so, what prompted you to do that? Was it helpful?*

FLESH: There was a current saying that to "eat someone's flesh" meant to slander them or to engage in backbiting. When Jesus included his flesh as food, people instantly recoiled from such an unthinkable idea, and many left off following him. This saying supported accusations that Christians were cannibalistic. *How do you make sense of this saying? Would you explain communion this way today? If so, how would you do it?*

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason. Dag Hammarskjöld

Citing Psalm 110, Jesus may well be seeking to dispel the prevalent expectation of a triumphal messiah, the traditional "son of David." His ideal messianic model is different. As with the Messiah Ephraim, 81 of Joseph, Jesus' Messiah involves suffering and death.

The new inscription, "Gabriel's Revelation," suggests that this different kind of Messiah was evolving at the turn of the era—different from the Messiahs, of David. Instead of a militant Messiah it envisions a Messiah who suffered, died, and rose. Jesus also understood the Messiah to be a Son of Joseph.

Like in "Gabriel's Revelation," also in the saying of Jesus, David is secondary to the other Messiah. In Nazareth, Jesus was known as the "son Joseph" (Luke 4:22; John 6:42). Thus it is quite possible that Jesus identified himself as the Messiah "Ephraim," the son of Joseph who is mentioned in "Gabriel's Revelation." Knohl, Israel. *The Messiah Son of Joseph: "Gabriel's Revelation" and the Birth of a New Messianic Model.* BAR: 9/10/08 Pg. 62.

"Body" and "blood" have an entirely different meaning for the Hebrew than for the Greek or for our peculiar cultural version of the Greek image. For the Hebrew, "bread" and "wine" are symbols, not substances. The word

“body for the Hebrew means “person-present.” It is the word for the whole real living, existential present person. For the Greek, the word connotes the physical, material element in the human composite of body and soul. For the Hebrew, “blood” likewise is whole person with particular emphasis on life. “Giving” one’s blood in Hebrew means literally giving one’s life – and it is not even what we would call a figure of speech.

Parr, Raymond. [Process Person Presence](#). Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990. Page 176.

Few of the New Testament’s many affirmations may more reliably be attributed to Jesus’ own awareness and self-interpretation that this – that the earthly mission on which he is engaged, and of which suffering and death are the inescapable consequence, is the execution of a heavenly commission, actualized by a perfect alignment of will and goal between the sender and the sent. Prompted by the unprecedented intimacy and familiarity of Jesus’ own language, expressing and addressing as Father the God in heaven who had sent him, the church developed Jesus’ consciousness of sonship into a most exalted designation: Son of God. Lewis, Alan E. [Between Cross and Resurrection](#). Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001. Pg. 120.

When we ask why these transformations are taking place, it becomes strikingly clear that the transformation of the bread and wine into the body of Christ is not for its own sake but for the sake of the transformation of the assembly into the true and living body of Christ. The whole purpose of what is taking place is not simply that the Eucharistic body of Christ be made present on this or that altar. The purpose is for the assembly to become more fully transformed into the ecclesial body of Christ, or, as we have been arguing here, to be taken up more completely into the totally free, totally loving and totally self-communicating, mutual love of Father, Son and Holy spirit. Take this away, and Eucharistic presence becomes meaningless. Daly, Robert J. *Sacrifice: the Way to Enter the Paschal Mystery*. America 5/12/03 Pgs 14ff.

The tree of life is the knowledge of God; when, being purified, you share in that knowledge you attain immortality. St. Thalassios the Libyan

I don’t know Who – or what – put the question, I don’t know when it was put. I don’t even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone – or Something – and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal. Dag Hammarskjöld

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Stone, Naomi. [thou preparest a table before us](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Helping Each Other into Heaven](#)

The Fourth Temptation

Satan, the great deceiver, was about to lecture some of his young recruits on the fine art of deception. “Before I begin,” he said, “I would like to hear what you consider to be the best methods of leading people away from God.”

“I think the best method is to convince people that there is no God,” said the youngest of the recruits.

“We call your method, ‘The Frontal Attack,’” Satan commented. “It has been used for centuries without great success. Only a handful of people ever accept a true position of atheism.”

“Perhaps we could convince people that there is no hell,” a second recruit suggested.

Satan sighed, “That was very successful for a long period of time. Liberals liked that line of reasoning very much. Unfortunately, we have promoted so much hatred and war that now people sense that they will have to account for all the evil they do.”

A small recruit ventured a suggestion, “Rather than try to convince people that there is no god, we should plant the idea that God is so easy-going that there is no need in making an immediate decision.”

“Ah,” the great deceiver said grimly, “You have stumbled on our second most effective temptation. Procrastination! For centuries it has been our best method with the young. Its only serious defect is that it is ineffective with older people..”

“Then what is the best method of deception,” the recruits all asked eagerly.

“Our best method works with those who go to church regularly as well as those who do not. We call it ‘Moderation.’ We convince people not to get too excited or fanatical about God. This way they convince themselves they are believers though in truth there is no fire in the soul. ‘Moderation’ works just about every time.

William R. White. [Stories for the Journey](#). Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1988. Page 25-6.