



## Heaven on Earth (Part 18) – That Which Satisfies

Matt Chandler – March 3, 2019

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Good afternoon. If you have your Bibles, turn to John, chapter 6. We're going to cover quite a bit of ground today. We're going to start in verse 22 and go all the way through verse 71. Several weeks ago, we introduced Jesus' authority as the gospel of John lays it before us. Basically, that Jesus has an authority that's "other than" because he is God. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He has always been; therefore, his authority comes not as one teacher among many, although this was a school of thought I could follow or *not* follow, but he comes as God in the flesh, as Creator.

So his "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" are more an invitation into actual life than they are "Hey, try this on for size." We said that when it comes to Jesus' authority, a lot of people will be game for Jesus' authority as long as Jesus does for them *with* that authority what they want him to do. People are cool with Jesus if what Jesus is doing is healing the sick and giving them good things and making everything go the way they want it to go, and they buck up against that authority when Jesus' authority confronts strongly held private beliefs.

I told you back then we were going to see this moment coming where people who seem to be all about Jesus get confronted with his authority and then show their true cards as trying to use Jesus as an errand boy. "I don't really see him as God, I don't want to follow him, and I don't worship him." I said that was coming. Well, today is the fun day that we get to see that, so I'm glad you are here.

Several years ago, Lauren and I were going to go out. We had two small children, Audrey and Reid. Reid was about 2 at the time. My sister, before she went over with her husband to live in Taiwan, offered to watch them. I was like, "Hey, free babysitting is the best kind of babysitting." So I took both of our small children over to Heather's house. Lauren and I went out to eat. Heather was a teacher and crafty and good at filling time with fun.

So what she thought she would do was play the movie *Willy Wonka*. Not the weird one with Johnny Depp...the weirder one with Gene Wilder. There's not a non-weird Willy Wonka. The whole premise is strange and maybe illegal. So she sits them down, and here's her idea: "As Willy Wonka goes, whatever candy they're having we're going to give to the children." So here's how the night went. Here are my kids... We're pretty tight on sugar, because if you're picking up from me that that might be a problem, you're right.

The way it worked is they're sitting down, bean bag chairs, or whatever. The kids walk into that first space. There are gummy bears on trees and a river of chocolate, so Heather is like, "Here's hot chocolate. Here are gummy bears." My kids are devouring it. Then they move on. "Here's a whole candy bar for yourself." You get to *lick* the candy bar; you don't get to actually *eat* it. You might not go to bed for four days. My kids go on a candy bender for hours, so when we get there to pick them up, they are humming.

So we get home. It takes like two hours to get them to bed, and that's with about eight spankings between when we got home and when we finally got to bed. (I know. You don't spank your kid. You just want them to go to the corner and think about stuff. That's not how I was raised, not how we're doing it.) They finally go to bed, and then Lauren and I... This will just show you how petty I am, in particular, and how petty I lead my wife into often.

Maybe you've had these conversations. We got our kids to bed and I'm like, "What's wrong with her? What is wrong with my sister? That's a total grandparent move." You don't expect that nonsense from your sister. You expect that from your parents. Right? If you have kids, your parents make things very hard on your children. They're like, "Yes. Yes. Yes. Here, yes." Then when you get them back, you have to dial them back in.

I had to have that talk with my in-laws. "You're just getting them whipped. That's all you're doing. I know they love you, but all you're doing is getting them whipped. You can work *with* me or you can work *against* me, because what I'm saying is...*Bam!* 'That's from your Mimi.' *Pow!* 'That's from your Poppy. That ain't on me; that's on Mimi and Poppy.'"

Here's what I mean by petty. I start brainstorming. "What are we going to do to *her* kids when we have them next?" I'm thinking not just candy but I'm thinking about what kind of obnoxious, soul-stealing toy we can buy them to take home that will drive their parents insane. I'm thinking about it. Then we hear this noise upstairs. As we head upstairs, we learn that that river of chocolate and the

gummy bears and the chocolate bars are now flowing out of my son's crib and onto the floor and toward the stairs.

Everything he had put in him delightfully is now coming out of him with far less delight. There were full-on undigested gummy bears, which means the brother didn't even chew. The brother was just sucking it in. Like, he never took a bite. He just swallowed stuff. It was so bad that Lauren and I weren't quite sure how to clean it up. The thought of, "Do we just burn the house down?" kind of came into our minds. "This is going to take hours. We don't have the tools for this."

If you're like, "What in the world does that have to do with Jesus' authority and our text?" I'm glad you asked. Let's dive in. John, chapter 6. We're going to pick it up in verse 22. If you haven't been here, the last thing we looked at in the gospel of John was Jesus feeding the 5,000, which was probably more like 12,000, and then Jesus walking on the water. Those were two signs, and this is the sermon attached to those signs. Let's dive into this together.

**"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. 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.'" So now we have some motivation on why they're following Jesus.**

**"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, 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.' 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. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.'

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' Jesus answered them, 'Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

It is written in the Prophets, "And they will all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.' The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'" Now, if you're not a Christian in here, that just got weird, didn't it? Let's keep reading.

"Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the

bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.'

Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?' But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, 'Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)

And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.' After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? [Where would 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.' Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.' He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him."

If we had time, this is actually probably four sermons. I just want to highlight a couple of things here that I think are really significant for our understanding in regard to whether or not we're trying to fill our souls with what cannot fill our souls or whether or not we're actually trending to feast on the thing that *can* nourish our souls. I want to start with *this*.

In verses 27-29, there's this really significant moment. Especially if you're type *A* and tend to stress and worry, this is for you. If you're type *A*...you need structure, you're like, "Give me the nine steps to glory"...this is going to be really helpful, *maybe*. Let's look at it. **"Then they said to him..."** They're in this conversation about ultimate reality, about life, about meaning, and they ask him, **"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"**

Tell me this isn't a human impulse. "Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just tell me what to do. Okay, great. Jesus is God. Great. What do I do? All right. He's Lord and Savior. Great. What are the nine things I need to do? Give me the six things to stop doing. Give me the nine things to start doing." We feel safest in that space. "Great. You're transcendent, all-knowing? Tell me what to do to live a blessed life. Tell me what *not* to do. Just give me the scales, and I can tilt them."

Look at Jesus' answer. Verse 29: "**Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.'**" Tada! That's it. Not *radically* believe, not *marvelously* believe. Do you want to do the work of God? Here it is: believe in the one he sent. It's the gospel. "What about feeding the poor? What about evangelism? What about a holy life?" What do you think all of that springs from: your effort or the abiding presence of Jesus?

It's not your effort that springs out of. Guilt and shame and failure spring from that. Behavioral modification is outside in its death. He already said, "I'm giving you life and spirit. The flesh is worthless." Do you want to know what the works of God are? Believe in the one he sent. He's teaching here that our faith isn't abstract. It's not an existential trust in the unknown. What Jesus is teaching here is that our faith has a coherent object at its center. We're not just a people of faith; we are a people who put faith in Jesus.

Our faith has an object. It's not abstract; it's Jesus. What it means to do the work of God is to cultivate belief, cultivate love, cultivate zeal for Jesus. That's what it means. The works of God are a growing love for Jesus and a growing understanding of who he is in all of his magnificence. If you define the works of God in terms of all of the "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" without the power of the Spirit, you will habitually be shamed and disappointed or you'll succeed and be an arrogant, self-sufficient fool who everyone despises. You'll be self-righteous.

There are two things that just reek and are death to those who are far from God. One is the angry, judgmental Christian who knows nothing of the love and mercy of Jesus, only knows, "Do this; don't do that." The other one is like, "Oh man. Let's just affirm everything. Nobody is wrong for doing anything." Both of these things are hatred toward the lost world, but compassion, truth, love, Spirit... That's compassion to the world. That's compassion to those outside of Christ.

I just wanted to lay that as a foundation of where we're going. What are the works of God? To cultivate trust and faith in Jesus. It looks like surrender. That's all it looks like. Our autonomous will colliding with the reign of Jesus and saying, "Your way is better than mine, even though I really would like to do what I would like to do in this situation." That's part of what it looks like.

Then in verses 35-50, he says he is the Bread of Life. "I am the Bread of Life." Now, there are seven of these "I am" statements in the gospel of John, and every time Jesus uses one of them it enrages his listeners. That doesn't make a lot of sense to us, but they're hearing something that it's

important we understand. Every time Jesus says, "I am *the* [fill in the blank]," he's using the same two words that are used in Exodus, chapter 3, when God gives his personal name.

When God introduces himself to his people, he says, "I Am Who I Am." That's translated *Jehovah*, *Yahweh*, *the Lord*. It's his personal name. My personal name is Matt Chandler, but I cannot terminate on myself, because I'm not God. If I said, "Matt Chandler is Matt Chandler," then I just sound like a moron, but God says, "I Am Who I Am," or better translated, "I Be Who I Be." It's more fun to say that.

Secondly, what he's saying is, "I am consistent. I have always been what I will always be." In the present. He said, "I am not defined by any outside force. I define myself." That's not true about me. I'm certainly not consistent, and Matt Chandler is Lauren's husband, Audrey, Reid, and Norah's daddy, pastor of The Village, whatever else. I need these other... God is just God.

What you think about him or how you want to define him has no bearing on him, much like whatever you feel about the sun doesn't ultimately matter to the sun. You can be like, "I don't think the sun burns that hot." It doesn't matter; it does. "I don't think the sun..." It just doesn't matter. The sun is the sun. What you think about the sun doesn't actually affect the sun.

God's "I Am Who I Am," "I Be Who I Be" is saying, "I am consistent, but *you* don't define me; *I* define me." It's not, "I am God who does..." It is, "I am God, I am God," and in the future he'll be the only thing that matters. "I Am Who I Am." It's the personal name of God to the people of God, and it was so holy on their lips that they wouldn't spell it. They would leave out vowels, and they would hardly say it. Jesus is like, "Yeah, I'm him."

Now he's adding on these little pieces. He says, "I am the Bread of Life," but he's saying that in an argument about manna from heaven. Again, like we covered two weeks ago, Jewish identity is wrapped up in the exodus. That's where they were called out, formed. That's where God led them into land he had promised them. All of that.

The Jewish identity is so rooted in the exodus, in the Passover, in the wilderness journey, and into the Promised Land they had no idea how to define themselves outside of that, which is why when they were a conquered people things got so dark. They had no idea how to define themselves outside of *this*.

Jesus just fed them, and then he's claiming to be God again, and they're like, "Well, what sign will you do? What miracle will you perform for us? Moses gave us bread to eat in the wilderness." Jesus is very quick to remind them. "Actually, Moses didn't do anything. Appreciate that, but Moses was a stuttering moron who failed in his attempt to get you out of oppression. God gave you bread to eat. In fact, he's giving you bread even now. In fact, I am the Bread of Life."

What's funny to me is that if you look at philosophy as far back as humanity goes, we are dedicated to numbing, ignoring, or trying to fill this angst inside of us for *something*. If you go read Plato, you go read Aristotle... It doesn't matter. Christian or non-Christian, everybody is trying to do something with this existential angst inside of us.

We know it's there. It bothers us, so we're going to numb it or we're going to ignore it or we're going to try to fill it. This kind of invitation to partake in something that will actually satisfy you is all over the Bible. Let me show you this. This is in Isaiah 55:1-3. It's going to sound very similar to what we just read. This is the prophet Isaiah:

**"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Listen to this question. "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live..."**

That does not sound like a cosmic killjoy who's sexually repressed and wants you begrudgingly submitting to him. "Come, eat. Drink your fill. Why do you put so much work into what's not working? Why do you spend so much money on what cannot satisfy you?" See, that internal angst, as we covered in *Recovering Redemption...*

You go to like four wells that are never going to work: a better version of yourself, somebody else to satisfy you, stuff that might satisfy you, or, God help you, religion that might satisfy you. All are bankrupt. All are a belly full of candy, tasting sweet but betraying you when all is said and done. All of those pursuits are not *bad* things; they just can't be *ultimate* things. Each of those pursuits is trying to answer a deeper question and lacks the ability to answer it.

A better version of myself... There's nothing wrong with that. If I want to be a better husband, nobody is going, "How evil is *that*." If I wanted to be a better father, if I wanted to be more

disciplined, if I wanted to be... Those are good things. They're just not going to solve what's wrong with me, because wherever I am...well, there I am.

By the way, there's no grade on that scale. "I want to be more disciplined. Okay. Got up earlier. Now what? I want to be more disciplined." It eats itself. It's like sin. It overpromises and then destroys. A better version of ourselves (which is, by the way, the air we're breathing, a self-help generation) is trying to answer this question...*Do I matter?* "If I could just make myself what I think I'm supposed to be, I can show that I matter."

Maybe that's coming from some wound as a kid. Maybe that's just in you. "Do I matter? I just want to matter. I want to be a better man. I want to be a better woman. I want to be better than I am." Tell me that doesn't echo in all of us. But the path we choose to follow it is not the bread of life; it's candy. It tastes sweet and betrays us. All it leaves us with is disappointment, frustration, shame, and a belief that Jesus doesn't work, when actually what you're trying is just to be a better version of yourself.

The second thing is others. When you're trying to get others to complete you, you're trying to answer this question...*Am I loved? Does anybody love me?* Not just "Do I matter?" but "Am I lovable? Is there anything lovable in me?" A surefire way to destroy relationships with people who actually *do* love you is to demand that they do love you in order for you to be complete and full. There's nothing more toxic to a marriage relationship like one spouse going, "I need you to complete me. I need you to make all of my frustrations go away." That's not happening.

The sinful soul is so broken that if you got everything you thought you wanted it would get on your nerves. It's just the truth. I'm going to make these up. I hope I'm not being too much of a generalist. Ladies, if you're like, "I just want him to be thoughtful. I just want him to be maybe a little bit more romantic..." If all of a sudden he was all that and you were like, "Ah, the sun has risen again on our household. Beauty is in our midst..."

"What would you like the day to look like? The house is already clean. Where are we going?" You'd be like, "Oh my gosh! Will you stop it?" Because that's not what you actually need. And, brothers, whatever fantasy is in *your* head, if she was all of that you'd be like, "Ugh!" We're broken. These things aren't meant to satisfy us. They are gifts that point beyond themselves. If you make it all about the gift itself you miss the Giver, and the Giver is what satisfies, not the gift.

Then the world... Stuff is trying to answer *this* question, and it's in all of us...*Do I measure up?* Not just, "Do I matter? Am I loved?" but now it's "Do I measure up?" In a culture that does not have rites of passage, when are we men? Whoever looks at us and goes, "You're a man now." Whoever looks at us and goes, "You're a woman now." So we're left just going, "Am I? Do I measure up?" Here's what's terrifying for this little experiment we're playing on our children with all of these devices.

Do you know what that little thing in your hand tells you? "Nope! You don't. No matter how pretty you are, you're not as pretty. No matter how wealthy you are, you're not as wealthy. No matter how muscular you are, you're not as muscular. No matter how successful you are, you're not." If you want a scary little sociological study, look at the rise of anxiety and depression with the rise of screen time. Screen time sows discontent into our world.

It says to you, "No, you don't measure up. No, you're not beautiful. No, you're not successful. No, your marriage isn't great. No, your kids aren't awesome. No, no, no. Be disappointed in you." You're just lying in bed at night. Your spouse is over there, probably doing the same thing. It's like, "Man! I've never been to Bora Bora for dinner. I don't matter."

"Man! I wish *I* looked good in a hat like that." "I remember when *I* was in shape like that." "Gosh, I wish we had a second playroom so each kid could have their own playroom." "Oh man! My car is a 2017. We are worthless people." It's just sowing discontent, and we're lapping it up. "Do I matter?" Our culture is very quick to go, "No, not really."

"Am I good enough?"

"Yeah, probably not. Maybe." There are no answers here.

The last little place we go to is religion. What I mean by *religion* is "Can I participate in frantic religious exercise that will make other people see that I'm a good person?" This is a huge sport in the Bible Belt South. Maybe *the* sport. People are like, "Oh, Southern football." I'm telling you, Southern churchgoing is a far larger sport than Southern football. "Let me go to church. I've memorized parts of the Bible. My kids are in all of these programs. I have all of these things I'm doing."

If that stuff terminates on itself and doesn't lead to a love for Jesus and a passion for who Christ is, all it does is create arrogance. All it does is create judgmental, really terrible people who Jesus has a

lot of harsh things to say about. The answer to the question "Am I good?" isn't "Yeah, because I did this checklist." You're trying to check a grade card that God doesn't grade by. That's not how God grades.

What ends up happening is we can create our own little grade card. We can start to feel better about ourselves. We're like, "God, I made all A's," and God is like, "On what test? I'm trying to give you wine and milk and food and trying to bless you with real life, and you're trying to score A's still. No, *I'm* you're A. You're summa cum laude because of *me*, not because of you. I've provided for you." And all of us who barely graduated said, "Amen." So, 2.7 in my undergrad, summa cum laude in Christ.

From here, things get really strange. From here, the conversation shifts from what satisfies us to flesh and blood. You and I are in this privileged position in human history where we're looking back through the resurrection and the institution of the Lord's Supper and Communion, all of that, onto the cross of Christ, onto this sermon, but that's not where *they* are. They're hearing about bread being tied to manna, and then all of a sudden he's like, "You eat my flesh and drink my blood."

Now, if you're in the crowd, you don't have the framework of the Table. You just don't have it. So it's no wonder it wigs them out a little bit. In fact, they even ask the question, "He doesn't have enough flesh to feed all of us. Is this man going to give us his flesh?" In fact, one of the big propagandas in the first three centuries against Christianity... Always propaganda against the people of God. *Always*. These days it's that we're closed-minded bigots who hate everybody simply because we might disagree.

That's the propaganda of today: you and I hate people. That's just not true. Back then it was "These people are cannibals." This was a campaign by the Roman Empire to discredit Christian movement in the ancient Near East. "They're cannibals." They would sow these fear campaigns that Christians, in their secret gatherings, eat flesh and drink blood. "Look. It's even in their own text." But we can see things that they could not see, which is why I want to be gracious to them.

What Jesus is pointing to in this moment is not just the Lord's Table but the great theological truth *underneath* the Table: the idea of union with Christ. When the Bible wants to talk about a personal and dynamic relationship between the believer and Jesus, it uses this phrase *union with Christ*. In fact, the New Testament is jammed full of that little two-word idea: *in Christ*.

Let me define *union with Christ* or *in Christ* with you. This is how Rightmire defines it: "'In Christ' is an expression of intimate interrelatedness, analogous to the air that is breathed: it is in the person, yet at the same time, the person is in it." The Bible is serious about what it means to be in Christ. It's found 8 times in the book of Galatians, 34 times in the book of Ephesians, 18 times in the book of Colossians.

It is used as an *instrumental* device. How does God save? How does God forgive? How does God give life? How does God resurrect? How does God move? How does God heal? He does so in Christ. It's also used in a *descriptive* sense. Where are the sons and daughters of God? They are in Christ. It's also used in a *locus* sense. What is the apex of Christian life? It is a life in Christ. Like the air we breathe...we are in it and it is in us...so the Christian is in Christ. The apex, the locus of our identity is that I am in Christ and he is in me.

It cannot be taken from me. You cannot persecute it out of me. Lauren could go, and I would be in Christ. Something terrible could happen to my three children, and I would be in Christ and he would be in me. This church could fire me, and I'd be in Christ and he'd be in me. (If you're like, "You couldn't get..." If they could fire Jonathan Edwards, they can fire anybody. I don't know if you know who that is, but Google it...later. Not now. I'm preaching.)

The defining reality of my life is that I am in him and he is in me. My life is not just about listening to the teachings of Jesus and trying to imitate them. Rather, the resurrection power of Jesus dwells in me via the Holy Spirit, and I am in him and he is in me. And I am in him and he is in me. And I am in him and he is in me. This is the rhythm of my life, so I'm able to live with courage. I'm able to live with joy. Regardless of the highs and lows of my life, I am steadfast, because I am in him and he is in me.

One of the privileges of pastoral ministry is sitting in rooms where this becomes evident, sitting in a room with hospice, sitting in a room with a family as they pick out what coffin, sitting in a room with families right after the police have left, right after the ambulance pulls away, and seeing that they are broken but not without hope. When the transient things of this world fall away, there will be only Jesus.

If your hope is in *those* things, what an awful day is that going to be for you. If your hope is in your home, your car, how you're perceived by people... Listen. People think about you a lot less than you think they do. People don't notice what you're wearing as much as you think they do. People don't

notice your car as much as you think they do. People don't notice your neighborhood as much as you think they do. All of this is an illusion. It's hyper-reality. It's not real. It's a lie.

What you're seeing online is a lie. I'm trying to help my kids with this all the time. Lie, lie, lie, lie, lie. That person's story... Lie, lie, lie, lie, lie. No sorrow mingled in with joy, no confusion, no loss, no doubt mingled in to all the high points is not reality. It's not life. It's hyper-reality. It's make-believe. It's a lie. Jesus here is saying, "Union with me is what matters. Me in you, you in me...*that's* the bread of life. *That's* what satisfies."

Although this is very much pointing to the Table, very much leading us into an understanding of Communion that is not just about forgiveness but about union... When we take the bread and take the cup and ingest it, take it into ourselves, something is happening where the Holy Spirit is present in that moment and we're celebrating not just all of our sins, past, present, and future, being fully, freely, and forever forgiven; we're celebrating that I'm taking Christ into myself and living out of that power when I walk outside this room.

Every week, we do the Lord's Table to remind you that you are in him and he is in you and that the weight of all this does not fall on your willpower but in your willingness to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Now, I told you that what was going to happen was there was going to be some real frustration when the authority and lordship of Jesus slammed into people's personal desires and personal strongly held beliefs, and that's what you see happening in verses 60-71.

They say, "This is too hard." It's not that they didn't understand; it's that they weren't doing it. It's not they were like, "I don't understand what he's saying." They were angry because they *knew* what he was saying and weren't going to do it. They weren't going to have it. They could tolerate Jesus as the one who fed them. They could tolerate Jesus as the one who healed their diseases. They could tolerate Jesus in some of his sermons. He had some good jokes. They would not tolerate him as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

As the pastor of this church for 16 years... Sixteen. I was a 28-year-old when you guys hired me. Just crazy. That whole... "Been to seminary?"

"No."

"Okay. Have you ever led adults?"

"Well, I mean, college."

"Okay. Do you want this job?"

"Uh, sure. Let's go."

In 16 years, here's what I could tell you. There have been a lot of men and women sit in the chairs in front of me who take notes while I'm preaching, who lift their hands while we're singing, and all of a sudden, the authority of Jesus collides with a strongly held belief, and they go, "I will not give that to you." They choose their own deity, which is no deity at all, to the offer of life. They choose, if I may, the sweetness of sin that overpromises and leads to destruction over the promise of the Bread of Life that fills us and leads us unto eternal life.

Here's what our culture is saying: "Your identity is in your sexual orientation. Your identity is what you own. Your identity is in how much you make. Your identity is in how people perceive you. Your identity is in what tax bracket you're in. Your identity is in what party you're in in regard to politics. Your identity is in *this*. Your identity is in *that*."

Jesus is going, "No, no. Your identity is in *me*, and all of those other identities must submit to your identity in me, because that's the path to life. I'm trying to lead you into what's good, not into what will harm you. You can't see, so you'll choose the gummy bears and chocolate rivers over real sustaining life. It's not going to seem that way to you. It's not going to taste that way to you. It's going to feel right and good, and you're going to wake up in your own vomit."

I have watched this play out for 16 years, and I'm telling you, I am confident that I am looking at men and women right now who are going to have a collision with the lordship of Christ and will choose their own autonomy and what *they* want over what Christ has commanded. It'll seem right and good and what they should do and what's best for them, contrary to the Word of God, and they're going to wake up one day in their own vomit, because that's what sin does to us: overpromises and then destroys.

"This is what you need to do to be happy." Destruction. "This is what you need to be happy." Destruction. "This is what you need to be happy." Destruction. This is the story of humanity, yet the invitation continues to go out to those, many of whom want no part of it. "Why do you spend your

money on what does not satisfy you? Why do you drink what cannot fill you? Listen to me and live," says the prophet. "Come, buy wine and milk without cost." Not your will...his gift. Not your effort...his grace.

"Come and eat the richest of foods, the choicest of foods, and live." What are the choicest of foods? His flesh, his blood, his death for your sins. So, here I am again in a long line of other heralds, heralding the same message and the same story yet again. It doesn't matter where you're from. It doesn't matter your present reality. It doesn't matter what your struggles are. Here's the invitation. These people were following Jesus because they wanted miracles. That's Jesus' accusation. "You're not here because you love me; you're here because I fed your belly."

It doesn't matter why you're here. You might be here just to finally get your neighbor to leave you alone, finally get your coworker to move on, maybe to somebody else. You may be here to satisfy your spouse. It doesn't matter to the Lord. Here's the offer: Do you want to be satisfied? Do you want the angst to stop? Here's the Bread of Life. It's Jesus.

"Oh man, I have a really bad relationship with religion." So did Jesus. Jesus isn't looking at crusty, angry religion and going, "That's what *I* came for." He's rebuking that stuff. He's far harder on *that* stuff than *you* would be regardless of what you've experienced. He called it a *brood of vipers*, *whitewashed tombs*. He said there's far more judgment coming for *them* than there was for Sodom and Gomorrah.

So don't use, "Oh man, this weird stuff back in my past, kind of crushing fundamentalism..." No, no. the offer for you is the Bread of Life for you today. It goes out to all, but many will love the ease and the good taste of that chocolate, of those gummy bears, of the better version of themselves, of the love of others, of the trinkets and toys, of outward religion.

See, outward religion kind of makes you a big man or big woman. You have metrics by which you can judge others. That's all it is. If those things aren't about Jesus, just metrics by which you're going to judge other people... It's a grade card that Jesus doesn't accept. If that's your offering on the last day... There are some pretty terrifying things said about that in Matthew 7, but that's not the text we're in. The Bread of Life offered to all who will come. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. Thank you for an opportunity to be together. I thank you that you, the I Am Who I Am, *are* the Bread of Life. You *are* the door. You *are* the gate. You

answer that you love us. You answer that you *are* our goodness, that the measurement for us is *you* and you have provided that for us. You are patient and kind with us.

I pray that you would remind us that we are in you and you are in us and that the Christian experience is more than just imitating your life and teaching but, rather, there's a present experience of you, risen and indwelling our hearts via the Holy Spirit. I thank you that in just a moment we'll take a little piece of bread and a little cup and celebrate the fact that you are in us and with us. Encourage our hearts.

Many of us are unprepared to relinquish our own sovereign authority, even around matters of religion, yet help us take the first steps of genuine faith, that we would simply say yes to you, that although the idea of you might seem harsh or offensive to us in *this* way or *that*, around *this* teaching or *that*, I pray we would come to you in humility, trusting, longing for you to satisfy the deepest parts of us.

Many of us *are* ready. We're ready to say we're bankrupt. We've done all we know how to do. We've done the opposite sex thing. We've done the money thing. We've done the work thing. We've done the marriage thing. We've had our kids, yet we still find this insatiable angst inside of us. So, Spirit of the living God, do what my little words can't do. Do what only your Word can do. Remind us. Stir us. Encourage us. Build us up. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.