

## The Covenant Maker: The Son

*series – What Is the Gospel?*

John 6:25-51

November 20, 2016

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We've been looking at together the covenant maker, the Triune God: the Father, and last week the Spirit, and this week, the Son. And we turn this morning to look at Christ and his role as covenant maker. We turn to this passage in the Gospel of John, one of the great passages where Jesus declares, "I am," drawing on that Old Testament declaration of God. As God would say to his people, "I am," now Jesus the Son, God incarnate, now looks at these people and he says, "I am," drawing us to himself and to what he is, who he is, and what he's done.

We turn now to this passage in John 6:25-51. Hear now the Word of God.

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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." <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

<sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> 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."

<sup>41</sup> So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup> 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'?" <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> 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—<sup>46</sup> not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.<sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.<sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life.<sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.<sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.<sup>51</sup> 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." [ESV]

This is the Word of God. (Thanks be to God.) Will you pray with me. Heavenly Father, great is your name. Your will has been done by your Son, who has come to us in his flesh and blood, who has died for us, and who calls us to you as our mediator. And he has called us to believe on him. He has called us to come to the only place where our hunger can be satisfied, our thirst can be quenched. So we come to you in his name, by the power of your Holy Spirit, and we ask you to feed us. Give us eyes to see and hearts to receive the great gift of Christ, our mediator. Help the teacher. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So you see in the outline before you this morning, as we look at this passage, [it] does a couple of things. First it points us to the work of Christ as the Covenant-maker, the Son of the Living God. And we will look at that together. But it also serves as an invitation to the Lord's Supper this morning, as this Supper points us to the one who satisfies our hunger and quenches our thirst. More on that later. And so it is meant to invite us as we look at together the work of Christ, but also to prepare us for the Supper. You'll see in your outline this morning, as we look at this passage together, it could be broken up in many ways, but you'll see this morning the **Food That Lasts**—we'll be looking at verses 25-35, a **Welcome Embrace**, verses 36-40, but also **Faithful Mediator**, verses 41-51. **Food That Lasts, Welcome Embrace, Faithful Mediator.**

So let's look together, then, at first, this **Food That Lasts**. Jesus does something that I think is worthy for us to pay attention to. And it is something which is subtle, but something that does not come naturally to us. And that is Jesus looks at their need and without irritation. He does not critique them in their need. He doesn't critique them in the fact that they are hungry and following him. It seems that way, but that's not really what he's doing. Jesus is doing something that is worthy of our attention, and it is first, that in demonstrating to them that he's pointing them to food that actually lasts, the first thing he does is he wants them to recognize reality. It's a reality, perhaps, that they do not see. In fact, I think we can argue that they don't see it, and that is why they are following him. You see, they think that they're following him because, you know, he gives bread. But he's pointing to something deeper. And he says this to them. He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." Yes, they've eaten and they know that he gives this food, because he's just fed the five thousand.

And so they're following him because yes, they desire of food, but there's also something else that they see in him, but they don't fully see it. They don't recognize the reality of who Jesus is, nor do they recognize the reality of their true hunger. And so in taking this opportunity he calls them out to recognize this: that they are hungry. They're hungry like their forefathers were hungry. They were hungry in the desert. But see, in the process of talking about this hunger and looking back at their forefathers, he's acknowledging their hunger. He's acknowledging that

they're following him. He recognizes that they're even following him for ways that they're not even sure, and he takes it so that they might recognize, *Oh, wait a second. There's something more.* Jesus, yes, understands that they want something more from him, and he uses that to open something up for them. Do you see that your physical hunger is there to demonstrate that there is something in you that cannot be satisfied by bread? He wants them to recognize that their physical hunger is pointing to something far deeper that they have not yet seen, that only he can see. And he wants them to recognize that, and then he wants to invite them in. And that reality is our physical hunger points us to the fact that we need something outside of ourselves.

They were full on the feeding, and the ones that now remain. . . We know that the feeding of the five thousand was more than five thousand—or five thousand men—which meant there were women and children there, far more than that. We don't know how many continue to try to follow and figure out where Jesus is. His disciples are there. But whoever is there, Jesus does not respond to their need with irritability, but rather uses an opportunity to demonstrate his love. And one of those ways is he wants them to recognize there's something far deeper than they realize. Their real problem isn't that they need bread. Their real problem isn't that they're following him because they want something from him. It's that they fail to recognize the reality of what their deep hunger is and they also fail to recognize who he is.

And so what he does is he reframes their hunger. He reframes their hunger. Even when they ask him, you know, *What is the work that we must do' and We'll do it, whatever we have to do.* And yet he takes them deeper. Oh no, this is not something you do. It's actually something that you need to receive. It's something that you need to see. He's reframing work; he's reframing hunger. Verse 31. He says,

“Our fathers ate 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 bread from heaven, but the Father who 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.”

And he said to them, “I am the bread; whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” [31-35]

They come to him and said, *Will you give us more of this?* He says in essence, Do you know what you're asking me for? Do you know what you're really demonstrating? You're really demonstrating that you want something that even all your work can never provide you, all of your wealth, all of your position, even following me. In essence he's saying: I can give you bread, but you're still going to be hungry. Isn't that what happened to your forefathers? It's the Heavenly Father, not Moses, who gave manna from heaven, but your forefathers still died. They're coming to him for bread, but Jesus is in essence saying: Just like your forefathers before you, if I give you bread, you will surely die. *OK, well then, what work do we need to do?* Oh, this is a work that is going to blow your minds. Look at the reality. Your real hunger is not for bread. Your real work is not going to come from your arduous, arduous work. It's going to come from looking on me and receiving me. Your hunger and what you're really missing, what you're really empty for, is that you need the Father. You need the one who has sent me. He says, “I am the bread of life.”

Jesus even reframes bread. So much so, that when we take this bread, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we're taking bread, but it's not in the bread—the power. Jesus reframed that when he gave it to his disciples. Take, eat this bread. This is my body given for you. This cup is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Take and drink. This was so offensive to them that not long after this—the latter part of this teaching—they were grossed out. They were like, we want nothing to do with this, because as we learn in the Gospel of Mark, they were ever seeing, but never perceiving. Jesus is trying to reframe the reality. He's trying to get them to understand: Do you not see that I am the Bread of Life? I am really the one that you seek.

But he goes further. He's not just pointing them to the fact that what they really long for, to be filled with, is God Himself through His Son and receiving him. He then continues to plead with them, if you will. And he says: Do you know what I have come to do? And here he welcomes them into the **Embrace**. Look at verses 36 and following. “But I said to you that you have seen me and yet you do not believe.” Jesus understands us. Even though he's trying to point them to the food that lasts, they do not believe. Verse 37. “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.” This is the welcome embrace. Jesus is now putting himself not only as the one who is the Bread of Life, he's now pointing them to what his work is in this relationship with the Father. It's the one as mediator. And he points, he invites them, and he says: Listen, I know you've seen, but you don't believe. But all that the Father gives me will come to me. Whoever comes to me will never be cast out.

So what's interesting about that, he says: Listen, what the Father has come to do. . .What I've come to do for the Father is not my will but his. And whoever comes to me will be the one who the Father draws. But there's something else that he says there that is absolutely important. He says I will never cast out. Whoever comes to me I will never cast out. It's such a beautiful picture of the love of God in Christ. He sees their hearts. He sees that they do not see. He sees that they do not believe, even after he's showing them that he is the Bread of Heaven, he is the one who has come. He invites them and he says: I've been sent not to do my will but the will the Father. He invites them in. And he says: whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

One writer said: You know, can you imagine? This has been a very long day for Jesus. He's just performed a great miracle and feeding of the five thousand. He goes on before his disciples. His disciples are in a boat and then he walks out to them. And then this is when we pick up the narrative. And they look at Jesus and they're like, well, you know, how did...how did you come here? This has been a long day. And so Jesus, remember, is God made man. You imagine was Jesus perhaps hungry? Was he perhaps tired and weary? We know that Jesus would get that way because he would go to the Father and he would pray on his own. And yet here Jesus is, perceiving that they do not see and they have not heard and they do not believe. He says: “Whoever comes to me I will never cast away.” Is that not a beautiful picture of how the Lord greets us every day? For the Lord's mercies and compassions are made new every morning.

Remember what we prayed earlier in the prayer of confession? Lord, you offer us—paraphrasing—you offer us welcome, but we still try to solve our own problems. Jesus welcomes us and he will never cast out. Perhaps in his weariness, in his own hunger, he looks through them and he says: “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.” So if you will, sort of like in a big office, you can imagine what a mediator does. What is a lawyer who's a mediator? He's trying to bring reconciliation between two parties. And he's standing before the Father who is in heaven. He's standing before the people who are grumbling, and he is offering mediation. And he says, “I have come not to do my will but the will of Him who sent me.” Jesus welcomes us in the name of the Father because that's the Father's will. I will not cast you out.

There is something else that he says just after this. Not only will they not be cast out, he says in verse 39: “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 whoever looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” Not only will they not be cast out, you will not be lost. Jesus will lose nothing that the Father gives him to do to. Jesus will lose no one that the Father draws to himself. And in all of that Jesus stands before the people who are coming after him for regular old bread, with hearts that do not understand, and he stands before them and he's inviting them in, because that's the will of the Father.

It's easy to forget the humanity and the divinity working together in Christ. Can you imagine standing before this group of people who've come to you for just bread and trying to say to them: Your hunger is something that that bread will never satisfy. Put your faith on me. Trust in me. I am the bread. To these ones who are ready to critique him he says: I will not cast you out. All who come to me will never be cast away, for that's the will of my Father. All that the Father gives me will not be lost. You will not be lost. I will lose nothing. Anyone who comes and believes on me will have eternal life. In other words, you're not going to die here. This is not the end of the story. The end of the story is not death, but it is life. Believe on me. Put your trust in me.

And he's looking out at this audience and he's saying: What do you believe? What are you really hungry for? What do you really want? And in doing so, Jesus is demonstrating the will of our Father in heaven. As we have learned, our God is Love. And God is making his appeal to the world through his Son. And he's saying: If you're hungry, come and eat. If you are thirsty, come and drink. But I am the Bread of heaven and my blood will bring eternal life. It's hard being a mediator, but this is what Jesus came to do—to make an appeal to the world for eternal life through him on behalf of the Father. Isn't it remarkable, ladies and gentlemen, that God did not leave us a book that we had to memorize to sort of figure everything out or give us a list of to-do's or check boxes, that if you check off these boxes then you will get it. No, he sends his Son to make an appeal, to draw to himself. Love has walked among us, and he is Christ.

Finally, he is a **Faithful Mediator**. Not only does he demonstrate that he is the food that lasts— whoever believes is the one who takes in this food and recognizes as they take this food they'll never be cast out, they'll never be lost—but he is also the faithful mediator. This is where things get interesting, in verse 41. “So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven.’ They said, ‘Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, “I have come down from heaven?”’”

This is what's interesting: A faithful mediator shows his faithfulness first in the face of insult. They're condescendingly looking at Jesus and essentially, in sort of contemporary language for us, this is what they're saying: Wait a second. Jesus has just said that he has come down from heaven. The issue is not that Jesus says that he has bread that leads to eternal life. The problem is he says, 'I am the one who has come from heaven.' That's the sticking point for them. And so they're grumbling. They're saying wait a second. His parents live over an Ellicott City. We know these people. How can he say that he has come from heaven? So they are not just doubting, but they're rejecting the central point of what Jesus has just been saying: I have come down from heaven to give you bread of eternal life.

But they go further. When he says this: "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.'" [verses 43-44] This whole idea of grumbling is that they are looking at Jesus and all that he has just said about welcoming them, what the Father has done, what Jesus has come to do—which is the will of the one who sent him, the Father in heaven—and they are rejecting Christ. And yet Jesus continues in his faithfulness. Thanks be to God that Jesus is faithful in the face of our rejection.

When we try to do our work on our own, we are rejecting Jesus. When we get lost in our anxiety and worry and fear and the wringing of our hands, we get frustrated because we can't control that which, if we were pressed, we recognize we cannot control—that when we do that we are rejecting Jesus. We are walking in our strength. But let's get more explicit. We are saying in our worry, in our anxiety, in our fear, in our frustration, in our anger that things are not working out the way they're supposed to be. We are saying to God: God, hey, listen, we've got this. Thank you for your service.

But here's the beauty of grace. In the face of their rejection, even in the face of how we reject God in a million ways, Jesus is still faithful. He is faithful. And Jesus is faithful here, and he tells them the truth as the faithful mediator: Do not grumble among yourselves. He tells them the truth. He opens their anger, he opens up their rejection, and he says: Do not do this.

But then he does something else. He calls out their complaining. In truth, he calls it out. But then he does something else. He does give them grace. Listen to what he says: "No one comes to the Father unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets that they will 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. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life." And one more time he says, "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." [verses 44-50] What is he inviting them to do? He is giving them to grace, the invitation to come. He's stating to them that God's face towards them is one of calling them to reconciliation. And Jesus on behalf of the Father is calling them in grace: Do not reject this bread. He says: I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. And what does he say that bread is? That bread is my flesh, my death on your behalf. I will be that sacrifice.

It is truly the beautiful work of grace that in the face of those who want to reject and insult, even in the face of those who do not understand or do not see or hear, Jesus does not respond in frustration. He doesn't respond in rejecting them. No, he actually does something that is the definition of love, as Philip Reichen says in his study about the love of Christ. He says: Love demonstrates itself in this way: It allows the needs of others to dictate the agenda. Jesus does not reject them in their rejection of him. He comes to them and welcomes them. Jesus here is fulfilling what the prophets declared God would do, and he declares it to you and to me this morning.

He comes. . . There are many ways in which I could sum this up as we go to the Supper, but it would be this from Zephaniah Chapter 3. This is what Jesus is doing in this passage and inviting them in the midst of their rejection. He's announcing an invitation as mediator. Hear the prophet Zephaniah, who in the face of Israel's disobedience and rejection this is what Zephaniah declared:

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;  
shout, O Israel!  
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter of Jerusalem!  
The Lord has taken away the judgments against you;  
he has cleared away your enemies.  
The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;  
you shall never again fear evil.  
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
"Fear not, O Zion;  
let not your hands grow weak.  
The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will quiet you by his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing.  
I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival  
so that you will no longer suffer reproach.  
Behold, at that time I will deal  
with all your oppressors.  
I will save the lame  
and gather the outcast,  
and I will change their shame into praise  
and renown in all the earth.  
At that time I will bring you in,  
at the time when I will gather you together;  
For I will make you renowned and praised  
among the peoples of the earth,  
when I restore your fortunes  
before your eyes," says the Lord. [Zephaniah 3:14-20, ESV]

Just as the Lord did through the prophet Zephaniah, Jesus now does on behalf of the Father. He looks to them and he calls them out as a faithful mediator. Come and eat of this bread, come and drink; and you will not be hungry and you will not thirst, because I am the Bread of Heaven. Take and eat; take and drink. And I will raise you up on the last day. For this bread is my flesh and this drink is my blood for eternal life. This is the mediator, the Son—the Love of God the Father inviting us.

Let's pray. Now Lord, we ask that by your grace you would invite us to this table, as we look to the one who is the Bread of Heaven, who gave up his body and his blood that we might be redeemed. Lord, I pray that we would not be hard of heart—that we would actually be seeing and understanding. But that cannot happen unless you enable us to understand that first we are recipients. It is not our work, but it is your work. Now, O Lord, open our hearts and our minds that we might truly understand and receive the Bread of Heaven, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.