

## **STOP GRUMBLING AS GOD DRAWS**

John 6:41-51 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Today, we continue in Jesus' mighty message telling the crowds at the synagogue in Capernaum, "I am the Bread of Life." In John 6:35, Jesus told this crowd, "I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst." Now in our text today, Jesus simply repeats Himself afresh in John 6:48 saying, "I am the Bread of Life." In verse 47, Jesus repeated His words about believing, saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life." This declaration of Jesus, saying, "I am the Bread of Life," stirred up anger, opposition, and grumbling hostility among Jesus' hearers.

Let me say at the outset of this message, that there is no easy way to preach this message today to prevent grumbling. Whatever I or any other preacher says will become the basis of theological argument. Jesus' words in our text were argued about then, and it has been argued over for centuries, as it will be today. Jesus was not in any theological camp such as Calvinist, Arminian, Reformed, Charismatic, Dispensational, Covenantal, Pentecostal, or any other theological camps, which were then unknown and not used. Jesus simply said in John 14:6, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me." When we have resistant hearts, after seeing who Jesus is, the Living Bread from heaven, Jesus must think of millions today as being where this crowd was in John 6:36, saying, "You have seen Me, and yet you do not believe." Even today as in Jesus' day, many listen to Jesus' words, and grumble, some don't hear, or won't hear, others because hear and doubt, while others hear and dispute, refusing to believe.

I know God the Holy Spirit is leading me to preach this message so as to attempt to answer questions that arise from Jesus' words. My hope is that we will pray, "Make the Book live in me, O Lord, Show me Yourself within Your Word, Show me myself, and show me my Savior., and make the Book live in me." What are the main questions that arise from this text today, part of Jesus' Bread of Life sermon?

### **WHY DO MANY GRUMBLE ABOUT JESUS BEING THE BREAD COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN?**

(I.) Notice John 6: 41-42. "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 used metaphors to unveil the spiritual reality of His identity. In John 3:7, Jesus told Nicodemus, "Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." Jesus wasn't speaking of a new physical birth, but a spiritual birth. Back in John 4:10-11, "Jesus answered the woman at the well in Samaria, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink, you would have asked Him, and he would have given you living water." Confused, she responded, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where do You get that living water?"

What was the problem this crowd was grumbling over? First of all, what was this grumbling? The Greek word John used here is **gong-good-zo.** It means murmuring,

talking to each other about someone nearby, but in a low tone, under our breath, secretly debating, grudging, displeased complaining, to snort, with anger at another, to blame another without the facts, to sigh with chagrin, or to groan with contempt. What Jesus shared with this crowd that they should have received with awe and gratitude, put this crowd in immediate conflict with Jesus, in total opposition. Why were they grumbling and murmuring? It was because Jesus' words collided with their own presuppositions. Jesus said five times in this message, "I am the Bread that came down from heaven." This word from Jesus did not fit any category this crowd could believe. This crowd was so sure and so confident they knew who Jesus was, they were unwilling to believe what He said.

What angered this crowd still angers millions of people today. By Jesus saying, "I am the Bread come down from heaven," Jesus was speaking clearly about His divinity, being one with the Father in heaven. The crowd wasn't angered that Jesus was able to multiply five barley loaves and two fish, nor were they even remotely concerned about Jesus walking on water, whether He did or didn't. But they were infuriated that Jesus was telling them they were being encountered by the Living God. Today, people could care less about whether Jesus was a great Teacher or how He lived. But talk about Jesus being God the Son, and the opposition begins. Under their breath, they were saying, "Look at him! You could never pick Him out in a crowd. He just looks like one of us. We know who His dad is—or so they thought—Joseph married Mary when she was expecting either his natural child of fornication or an illegitimate child—as they thought. We know his parents. How does He say these things?" We know His roots in Nazareth in Galilee. We saw Him grow up. Now the illegitimate son grows up and makes these extravagant claims to be God or His Son. Who's He kidding to think we'll believe? A second question...

### **WHAT COMMAND DID JESUS GIVE THIS UNBELIEVING CROWD?**

(II.) Notice Jesus commanded them, in verse 43. We read, "Jesus answered them, **“Do not grumble among yourselves—stop grumbling.”** Jesus knew this pattern of these who were His own, but who received Him not—John 1:11. Even in the days of Moses, the Jews were known for their murmuring. In Exodus 15:25, Jesus remembered their grumbling in the wilderness of Shur, where they found the bitter waters of Marah. We read, "And the people grumbled against Moses." In the wilderness of Sin in Exodus 17:3, we read, "Therefore the people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you grumble/murmur/quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" After the spies came back from Jericho with a mixed report, we read in Numbers 14:2-3, "And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt? Or would that we had died in the wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" This command of Jesus is for you and me! Murmuring against Moses and wanting to stone him, saying, "Has God only spoken through Moses?"—all the murmuring was just a shadow of the grumbling and murmuring against God's Son, Jesus, God's living Bread come down from heaven. We read much more about this generation from the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews.

We know this grumbling that led to the Lord swallowing up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families into the heart of the earth, and we know this grumbling by Miriam and Aaron lead to Moses' sister Miriam getting leprosy for 7 days before God healed her. Be certain, grumbling against the Lord's anointed in our midst, is but a shadow of the worst sin of grumbling, grumbling and blaspheming against the Lord's Messiah, God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, which is what this crowd was doing. There is a third question.

### **WHO CAN COME TO JESUS UNLESS THE FATHER DRAWS THEM?**

(III.) Notice the answer in John 6:44. We read, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." This is a mighty statement from Jesus, and whole denominations are built and split and splintered over the meaning of Jesus' words in this declaration. We must not skip over these words or dismiss them, even if they seem to fly in the face of our theology. To come to Jesus, the Father must call you and the Father must draw you. No one wakes up on a Sunday morning on their own and says, "I am going to come to Jesus on my own power or desire. We read in I Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." We read in Jude 1:1, "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." Jesus here is telling us by His divine Word and revelation that coming to Him cannot be sorted out by talking the matter over, in your own heart or by arguing it out with others. This drawing of the Father is part of His divine grace. As long as we remain confident in our own ability, without divine help to come to Jesus, we can never believe. Only the Father can move us to this step. The thought that people seek and seek to find Jesus, before He lets us find Him is foolishness.

Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden, we learn that no one comes to God unless God initiates it. After Adam's sin, God came calling for him, and did Adam say, "I have been looking and looking for you?" No! Where were Adam and Eve? Genesis 3:8 tells us they were "hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord." It was God who called to Adam and said, "Where are you?" Our seeking for God is not initiated by us, but our seeking is the movement of His divine grace. It is God who initiates the search for us, and He turns us from being unwilling and reluctant into being willing to come to Jesus. Now believe me, this is all the mystery of the Gospel, and no man can totally fathom or describe how it all works. Yet it is the love of God which comes to overwhelm our human hearts, presenting Jesus to us, not simply as existing or creating us, but as our sacrificial Redeemer who alone can supply all our spiritual needs.

The word draw is not the Greek word **suro**. Suro implies that the drawing is a dragging drawing, like dragging a man into court as Paul dragged men and women into prison for believing in Jesus—Acts 8:3 or as dragging fish to the shore that are struggling to get away—John 21:8—as the net of fish was so great it was nearly impossible to haul or drag the net full of 153 fish to shore. The word for draw Jesus used is **helkuo** which means to draw without dragging, such as drawing a sword—John 18:10 as Peter drew a sword. This drawing is not against our will like suro.

Hosea 11:4 tells us God draws us with chords or bands of love. Jesus explained drawing further in John 6:64, saying, “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 Jesus said, “That is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted Him by My Father.” Fourthly,

### **HOW DOES GOD THE FATHER DRAW US, IS IT NOT BY HIS WORD?**

(IV.) We read the next words of Jesus which are, “**It is written!**” We read in John 6:45-48, “It is written in the Prophets, “And they will all be taught by Go. Everyone who has heard and leaned 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.” Jesus was quoting Isaiah 54:13, which the Jews knew about, which says, “All your children shall be taught by the Lord. and great shall be the peace of your children.” Jesus also was doubtless thinking of Jeremiah 31:33-34 which declares, “But this is the covenant that I will make with house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, “Know the Lord, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.”

Now I want to show us **(1) that God has the initiative in this drawing of us to Jesus,** but it must be emphasized with no less vigor, as D.A. Carson says it that **(2) it is the responsibility of people to come to Jesus, and when we come to Jesus, we come willingly, voluntarily, and without constraint or dragging.** Let me begin by showing us that the divine impulse of our will starts with God drawing us. In the case of this crowd, as Jesus spoke, the resistance mounted, grumbling, disputing, saying, “He’s not from heaven.” The words of Jesus collided with their perceptions of who Jesus was. Let me show us the divine side of our salvation and the Father’s drawing of us and who are saved or not saved. (1) We read in John 6:37 that God gives people, that’s us to Jesus, and we come to Him. (2) John 6:65,70 tells us that “no one can come to Jesus unless it is granted by the Father...Jesus answered them, “Did I not chose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” (3) Those who come to God are of God. Look at John 8:47. “Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” (4) John 10:26,27 adds, “But you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” (5) Speaking of the Jews, we read in Romans 11:25, “Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers, a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” Those verses speak of God’s divine initiative and of people coming, believing, or not coming and not believing. People like to feel independent and that they come to Jesus entirely of their own volition. That is an impossibility—John 6:44.

But the mystery of how we are saved continues as we see how everyone is called to believe and (2) **it is the responsibility of people to come to Jesus, and when**

**we come to Jesus, we come willingly, voluntarily, and without constraint or dragging.** In John 12:32, Jesus told His disciples that the hour was come when the ruler of this world will be cast out. Then we read, “And I, when I am lifted up, (that’s the lifting up on Calvary’s cross that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about) when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.” This Greek word is the same **helkuo** word. This is the same drawing power of Nicodemus in John 3:16 and Jesus’ whosoever believes in Me—that is over and over in the Word of God. When the Father draws or grants, calls or compels us to believe, it is never by the savage constraint of a forced against our will dragging or drawing of us. God’s drawing is the wonderful wooing of the Lover of our soul. Somehow, by an insight from God’s Word, a teaching, a scriptural illumination, or the Word of God being memorized or implanted in us, and the fulfillment of God’s promise in Isaiah 54:13 is accomplished in us. that “all our children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of our children.” Thus, God comes with His word to our hearts and minds and writes His words on our hearts and cleanse us from our uncleanness. (Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:24-26). Fifthly,

**WHY MUST WE KEEP OUR BELIEVING TO BE SAVED A MYSTERY, A CALL ALL MUST RESPOND TO, YET A WORK ONLY GOD CAN DO?**

(V.) Notice verse 49-51. We read, “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 comes 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.” When Jesus spoke of His flesh, He spoke of his sacrificial death bodily on the cross, that we hope to speak of next Sunday. We sing about the divine side of salvation so often in our hymns. In Daniel Whittle’s 1883 hymn, “I Know Whom I Have Believed,” we sing in verses 1-3, “I know not why God’s wondrous grace to me He has made known, nor why, unworthy, Christ in love redeemed me for His own. I know not how this saving faith to me He did impart, nor how believing in His Word wrought peace within my heart. I know not how the Spirit moves convincing men of sin, revealing Jesus through the Word, Creating faith in Him. But I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed unto Him against that day.”

Yet we read about in John’s Gospel the compelling call to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no salvation without believing and receiving, coming, and eating the Bread of Life, repenting, and drinking from the fountain of Living Waters. John used the verb **πιστεύω**, usually translated believe, 98 times in 85 verses of his Gospel. We don’t know why he never used the noun **πίστις**, usually translated faith, in his Gospel? Yet so many hymns and choruses speak of our necessity to believe to be saved. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” or Carol Owens hymn Freely, Freely –He said, “Freely, freely, you have received, Freely, freely give, Go in my Name, and because you believe, Others will know that I live.” We sing “Almost Persuaded, Now to Believe, Almost Persuaded, Christ to Receive.” We sing “Just As I am Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve, Because Thy promise, I believe, O Lamb of God, I come. Keep giving God all the credit for salvation, Keep compelling the lost to believe in Jesus. I love you.

